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What is This?

Latino Emergent Bilingual Youth in High Schools: Transcaring Strategies for Academic Success

Ofelia García[1], Heather Homonoff Woodley[1], Nelson Flores[2], with Haiwen Chu[1]

Abstract

This article explores the results of a study of Latino youth in New York City public high schools. We propose that the common element among the schools is what we call here *transcaring*, an overarching culture of care that allows for the creation of third spaces within school, transcending traditional dichotomies around language, culture, place, and measurement found in many U.S. schools. We identify the different threads that make up transcaring strategies—translanguaging, transculturación, transcollaboration and transactions through dynamic assessments—focusing on each of its components by drawing examples from our data.

Keywords

Hispanic students, minority academic success, urban education, high school programs, ESL programs, Hispanic education, translanguaging, emergent bilinguals, bilingual education, Latino students

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Introduction

Recently there has been a plethora of studies that address the failure of U.S. schools in educating Latino students in general (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Murillo et al., 2010; Pedraza & Rivera, 2005; Pew Hispanic Center, 2004; San Miguel & Donato, 2010; Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008; Valenzuela, 1999). Because of the interest in students whom the federal government calls "Limited English Proficient" ("LEP") students, and others call "English Language Learners" (ELLs), much scholarship has looked at how to develop the English of these students (see, for example, Faltis & Coulter, 2007; García & Kleifgen, 2010; Walqui & Van Lier, 2010). Although being Latino or being "LEP" are federal categories of accountability according to *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*, being a "Latino LEP" is not a subgroup explicitly addressed by NCLB. Thus, scholarship that looks at the education of Latino English learners (hereafter emergent bilinguals),[1] and especially those in high schools, is scant (for some exceptions see Bartlett & García, 2011; Valdés, 2001; Valdés, Capitelli, & Alvarez, 2010).

This article focuses on secondary schools that have a large Latino emergent bilingual student body, but where these students experience success and graduate. We situate our study in the educational politics of New York City public schools where the research was conducted.[2] After describing the schools in our sample and the methodology of our study, we identify the practices that these successful schools employ in educating Latino emergent bilinguals. By drawing examples from our data, we point out that these successful schools extend the concepts of native language, native culture, as well as those of traditional school structures and assessment practices.

We argue in this article that Latino students who are learning English need more than to be taught in English only or to simply include their "native" language and culture. We theorize, based on our findings, that the common element among all effective schools in our study is what we are calling here *transcaring*—caring enacted to build a common collaborative "in-between" space that transcends linguistic and cultural differences between schools and homes. The transcaring strategies that we identify build on, but go beyond, traditional understandings of care, constructing a "third" space (Bhabha, 1988) that supports students in developing fluid subjectivities that extend beyond "first" or "second" languages and cultural identities.

We start by reviewing understandings about the inclusion of language, culture and care that are often identified in the literature as essential to the success of Latino students. We build on, and extend, these understandings to construct our concept of *transcaring*.

Language, Culture, and Care in Educating Latino Emergent Bilinguals

A monolingual English-only education has often been blamed for the large scale failure of Latino students in schools. The value of using the "native language" of Latino students, Spanish, in their education, and most especially in the education of those who are still developing English, has been the pillar behind the growth of *bilingual education programs* in the United States (Crawford, 2004; Cummins, 1981; García & Kleifgen, 2010). English is considered Latino students' "second language." The belief is that a transitional bilingual education (TBE) would accelerate second language acquisition through the use of the students' first or native language. Bilingual education in the students' native language, as well as in English, is perceived as a way to make education relevant for Latino students for whom Spanish is a first language.

Parallel to bilingual education efforts and bilingual pedagogies, *culturally relevant pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings, 1995) or *culturally responsive pedagogy* (Villegas & Lucas, 2002) propose that teachers must affirm the students' lived experiences. Pedagogy that draws on students' cultural knowledge is thought to be capable of developing students who are "academically successful, culturally competent, and socio-politically critical" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 477). Going beyond school-centered pedagogy, Moll, Amanti, Neff, and González (2001) have proposed that teachers build on the students' *funds of knowledge*; that is, "the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133) in order to connect homes and classrooms (see also González et al, 1995).

Speaking specifically about the importance of leveraging Latino culture in Latino education, Rivera and Pedraza (2000) use the image of *sankofa*, a Swahili word that refers to going back to the source, and suggest that it is important for Latino students to explore their "historical, sociocultural and familial traditions and legacies" (p. 234). Tejeda and Gutiérrez (2005) suggest the importance of "a decolonizing pedagogy . . . conceptualized from the standpoint of socially, culturally, and linguistically dominated people struggling for social and ideological decolonization" (p. 264).

In many ways, the inclusion of students' languages, cultures and history is a manifestation of "caring." Noddings (1984, 1995) puts *care* at the center of what must be done if students are to be successful: "We will not achieve even that meager success [to raise achievement scores] unless our children believe that they themselves are cared for and learn to care for others" (pp. 675-676).

For Noddings (1995), "caring implies a continuous search for compe-tence" (p. 676). Noddings' concept of "care" has been supported and extended by scholars working on the education of minorities (Garza, 2009; Rivera-McCutchen, 2012), and especially of Latinos. Valenzuela (1999) speaks of an *authentic form of caring* necessary to educate Latinos that "emphasizes rela-tions of reciprocity between teachers and students" (p. 61). Valenzuela adds: "Students' precondition to caring about school is that they be engaged in a caring relationship with an adult at school" (p. 79). Antrop-González and De Jesús (2006) link authentic caring to values familiar to Latinos: *personalismo* and *confianza.* Nieto (2005) further explains what she means by caring:

> *Care* is demonstrated most powerfully through high expectations and rigorous standards, and in teachers' beliefs that the students are worthy and capable. . . . In the most effective examples of research we have seen, caring has included not only providing affection (*cariño*) and support for students, but also developing strong interpersonal relation-ships with students and their families, learning about and from them, respecting and affirming their language and culture, and building on these to support learning. (p. 32)

But beyond *cariño, personalismo, confianza*, and high expectations by respectful teachers, care in the education of Latinos must be *critical* (Rolón-Dow, 2005), grounded in historical and political understandings of the cir-cumstances and conditions faced by minority communities. As we will see, this politicized notion of care that addresses questions of power and otherness is also present in the schools in our study. Our schools are extending these notions of care while calling into question many constructs such as static first/native and second languages, as well as invariable cultures. Because our schools are all in New York City with its unique Latino and educational char-acteristics, the next section reviews the language and cultural context of Latinos in the city, as well as the educational context in which the study was conducted.

Latino Youth and New York City

Latino immigrant youth in New York City (NYC) share some characteristics with Latinos in other parts of the United States, but they also differ in that New York is a distinctive city with its own educational politics. Puerto Rican Spanish-speakers, U.S. citizens by birth, came into NYC schools in great numbers in the mid-20th century (Nieto, 2005). As a result of much community

pressure to redress the school failure of Puerto Ricans, the New York City Board of Education entered into the Aspira Consent Decree (1974), providing TBE to Latino students who were not proficient in English (García, 2011; Reyes, 2006). But the support for bilingual education decreased with changes in the city demographics, as well as its educational politics, reflecting the national context of support for English-only measures and anti-immigration.

The city's Latino population today is not only numerous, but also quite varied. In 2009, there were 2.4 million Latinos in NYC, constituting 28% of all city residents. Table 1 identifies the most numerous five national origin groups in the city. No Latino group is dominant, and Mexicans who constituted 66% of all Latinos in the United States in 2009, only made up 14% of the NYC population in that same year.

Table 1. Five largest Latino National Origins in NYC, 2009.[a]

National origin	Number	Percentage of Latinos (%)
Puerto Rican	782,222	33
Dominican	582,456	25
Mexican	305,664	14
Ecuadorian	185,022	8
Colombian	111,440	5

[a]Figures are from the U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2009.

According to the New York State Education Department (2010), 40% of NYC's public school students are Latinos. In all, there were approximately 382,444 Latino students in grades K-12 during the 2008-2009 school year (New York State Education Department, 2010). Furthermore, of those public school students in NYC who are emergent bilinguals (that is, classified as English language learners), over two-thirds are Latino (Stiefel, Schwartz, & Conger, 2003). It is interesting to note that 50% of new immigrant students in NYC arrive at the high school level, a time when social and academic pressures are intense, and when the development of an additional academic language is complex. Many of these immigrant adolescents arrive with low literacy in Spanish, and have experienced interrupted formal education (Advocates for Children of New York, 2010).

Although Latinos constitute a great proportion of NYC students, they are not faring well. According to the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (2007), only one third of Latino New Yorkers earn high school

diplomas—a rate lower than those of all other ethnic groups. De Jesús and Vásquez (2005) argue that while the NYC Department of Education in 2005 reported 46% of Latinos as graduating, only 33.4% of Latino graduates actually received a Regents-endorsed diploma[3]; while 33.4% of Latino students had to enroll in a fifth year of high school.

In June 2002, Mayor Michael Bloomberg assumed mayoral control of schools, and in 2003, the newly formed New York City Department of Education began implementing a set of NCLB-guided reforms, entitled *Children First*, that centralized power and focused on leadership, empowerment and accountability (Ravitch, 2010). Schools were asked to submit a comprehensive language allocation policy (LAP), which outlined a systematic plan for providing emergent bilinguals with language development programs and curricula. The LAP also required that schools select one of three program options for emergent bilinguals: (1) free-standing English as a Second Language (ESL), where instruction is all in English, (2) TBE, in which two languages are used, and instructional time in English increases as students gain proficiency, or (3) what the New York City Department of Education calls "Dual Language," which are bilingual programs where the language other than English is used at least 50% of the time throughout the child's stay in the school.[4] In 2010-2011, 70% of emergent bilinguals were in English-only programs, 19% in TBE programs, and 4% in dual language bilingual programs (Bartlett & García, 2011; New York City Department of Education, 2011).

Another reform, which had an important impact on our study, was the closing of large, comprehensive high schools and the opening of small schools (Flores & Chu, 2011). The number of students enrolled in high schools with fewer than 600 students grew from 29,000 in 2002 to 85,000 in 2008 (Bloomfield, 2009). Many of these small schools were unwilling or unable to develop programs for emergent bilingual students. In 2007, the city required that new schools accept emergent bilinguals, although 43% of English learners were in just 17 of the 233 small high schools in 2008 (Advocates for Children of New York and Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, 2009). It is the context of a city with changing Latino demographics and less community power over education, the result of Mayoral control, that frames our study of effective schools for Latino emergent bilingual youth. We now turn to describing our sample of schools.

Our Sample of Successful Schools

To select our sample we considered public high schools that had a high Latino graduation rate (over 50%) over 4 years, a higher than city-average Latino population (over 37%), and a higher than city-average emergent bilingual

Table 2. Schools and Characteristics.

School	Latino graduation rate (%)	% Latino students	% emergent bilinguals (ELLs) of total student body	% free and reduced lunch	Types of programs available as identified in LAP	Total enrollment
A	81	100	90	89	Transitional bilingual	410
B	81	100	91	95	Transitional bilingual	475
C	76	99	91	82	Transitional bilingual	500
D	74	90	27	83	Transitional bilingual	690
E	71	91	35	89	ESL	670
F	66	87	88	97	ESL & "Dual language"	300
G	66	58	91	97	ESL	390

Note: ESL = English as a second language; ELLs = English language learners; LAP = language allocation policy.

population (over 13%). The primary source of data for the construction of our total sample was the NCLB accountability information for the cohorts from 2001 through 2004, corresponding to the graduating classes of 2005 through 2009. To be held accountable under NCLB for the performance of a subgroup such as emergent bilinguals, there must be at least 20 students in each cohort. Because some schools have fewer than 20 emergent bilinguals in a grade level, only 109 schools had enough students to be able to calculate an emergent bilingual graduation rate. To construct the sample, the 109 schools were separated into three groups based upon Latino graduation rate (high, medium or low), and two groups each based upon the percentage of Latinos (high or low) and the percentage of emergent bilingual at each school (high or low). The cut points for Latino graduation rate were selected at the three terciles to create three groups of equal size. These cut points were at 50% and 36%. The cut points for percentage Latino and percentage emergent bilingual were selected at the point given in the NCLB accountability information for the cohort included, as overall 37% Latino and 13% emergent bilingual. We were interested in high schools that had high graduation rates among Latinos despite having a large number of Latinos and emergent bilinguals. Surprisingly, only 12 high schools in the city met these criteria. Seven

of these schools constituted the sample of our study. The school characteristics appear in Table 2. None of our schools received any extra funding or had educators that put in extraordinary effort. However, as we will see, their efforts transcended traditional notions of national languages and cultures, supporting Latino students' fluid language practices and subjectivities.

All schools in our sample had a high graduation rate for Latinos (over 66%) in a city where the mean Latino graduation rate is 45%. All schools except for one have student populations that are all Latino, or almost all Latino, and in all but two of the schools nearly all students are emergent bilinguals. The vast majority of students registered in these schools is eligible for free or reduced school lunch. Furthermore, all schools within our sample are small high schools with fewer than 700 students. This may have to do with the finding by Flores & Chu (2011) that emergent bilinguals in small secondary schools have higher graduation rates and accumulate more high school credits than larger high schools.

As we said above, six of our seven successful schools are predominantly Latino, and five of the seven successful schools have a predominantly emergent bilingual population. This is an important observation that runs against the often-repeated assertion that linguistically heterogeneous settings provide the best educational contexts for emergent bilinguals (Cloud, Genesee & Hamayan, 2000). In contrast with this common claim in the literature, the characteristics of our sample suggest that an effective education for Latino high school youth who are developing English might be better carried out in schools that focus exclusively on this population (see also Bartlett & García, 2011). We now turn to our research methodology.

Research Method

Data Collection

The data collection was designed to reflect both what was going on in classrooms through direct observations, as well as in the school as a whole through interviews with principals and key personnel. In order to describe what went on at the classroom level, administrators at each school were asked to select two 9th-grade Latino students—one at the beginning levels of English learning, and another more advanced. The classes of each of these individual students were then observed for an entire school day. The research team completed a detailed classroom observation protocol, which had prompts to describe the following: The content and flow of the lesson, language use in the classroom, the physical space of the classroom, instructional

materials used, and any particularly outstanding moments of student learning or exemplary pedagogy.

Interviews were also conducted at each school with individuals representative of different levels of school organization—school leaders, teachers, and support staff. Administrators were asked to select the teacher to be interviewed on the basis of being particularly effective with Latino students, usually a teacher who had been observed. In order to deepen understanding of the affective, social, and emotional supports in place for Latino students, a guidance counselor or social worker was also interviewed. Finally, to provide an overall account of the school, an assistant principal or the principal was interviewed at each school. There were separate interview protocols for each of these, but each asked for extended narratives about the trajectories of Latino students and the school's strategies to educate them.

Analysis of Data

The interviews at each school were transcribed. One complete set of interviews was coded together by the entire group of researchers in order to develop reliability. This process of collaborative open coding produced a set of top-level codes, which were as general as possible, and were then used to code the rest of the interviews. Codes from the interviews were then corroborated through evidence from classroom observations. These codes were progressively combined and revealed five topics that cut across the effective schools and that were signaled by both interviewees and observers—care, language use, cultural use, school structures, and student assessment. An intensive reading of the data in each of the categories led us to theorize the concept of *transcaring*. As we explain in the Findings section, it was the concept of transcaring that allowed us to frame and explain our data on the success of these schools with immigrant Latino youth.

Findings: Transcaring

The schools indeed responded to the three elements identified in the literature as crucial to Latino student success—a culture of care, the use of Spanish, and the inclusion of Latino cultures and histories—but there was more. We start by giving instances of critical authentic care within the schools and classrooms in our study to then look at how this was extended in the schools. At School F, for example, when asked what the school did well, a teacher immediately responded: "We have teachers who really care. . . . Personal relationships are very important; students have to trust that you are

there for them" (School F, interview, February 22, 2010). Adults at various schools acknowledged love for their students, using the word freely to describe a true emotional attachment to the well-being and lives of their students. One of them told us: "*Ellos saben quién de verdad se preocupa por ellos; quiénes les tienen en el corazón.*" ["They know who really cares for them, who holds them in their heart."] (Administrator, School E, interview, April 8, 2010)

Teachers, counselors, and administrators modeled care as they went above and beyond the parameters of a job description. Putting in extra time, resources, and assistance to improve student experiences and achievement was a common occurrence among adults of various roles, and many saw themselves as advocates for students. School staff members visited colleges to speak with financial aid officers on behalf of students. Others went to court with students to represent them when guardians could not do so. At two schools, the staff was working together to create their own scholarship programs, one specifically for undocumented students. At each school, teachers volunteered extra hours to help with student clubs and activities. A moving example from School A sheds light on the lengths to which adults have gone in caring for students and their families. When a student's mother went missing, he contacted the principal who, along with his own family, jumped to action calling hospitals, the police station, and Emergency Medical Service. It was the principal who eventually found the mother and brought her back home. This illustrates a familial approach to education, a "familism" that MacDonald (2010) identifies as the defining feature of Latino communities where loyalty to *familia* and family solidarity are most important. A principal explained, "I tell the staff to think of students as your own child or relative; then I ask them, 'What would make you want to bring your child to this school?'" (School F, interview, February 22, 2010).

While the caring described above goes a great way in getting to the heart of what made these schools successful, there was an excellent element of care present in these schools that extended the authentic care described in the literature. We have developed the concept of *transcaring* to describe this new facet of care observed. Transcaring builds on the concept of care that was first introduced by Nel Noddings and expanded on by Latino scholars through the concepts of *cariño*, authentic care, and critical care. But it goes beyond these other conceptualizations by placing the fluid ethnolinguistic identities of Latino emergent bilinguals, as they construct U.S. bilingual identities that extend beyond traditional national, cultural, and linguistic borders, at the center of the schooling process. The *transcaring* that we describe below refers to the ways in which teachers and administrators in these schools *straddled* languages, cultures, and modes of knowing and performing in the borderlands in

which these immigrant students live (Anzaldúa, 1987; Elenes, 1997). These schools helped emergent bilingual youth negotiate rigid borders of languages, cultures, and ways of learning and performing, in order to expand their abilities and gain greater understandings.

The four transcaring strategies that we have identified are:

1. Translanguaging and bilingualism in education;
2. *Transculturación* in culturally transforming pedagogy;
3. Transcollaboration and *compadrazgo* among all communities of learning;
4. Transactions through dynamic assessments.

Rather than moving these students toward English only or working to maintain the Spanish of their home countries, these schools used practices that allowed Latino students to "language" fluidly, using their entire emergent bilingual repertoire to learn. We refer to these strategies as *translanguaging* (García, 2009). At the same time, rather than simply drawing from students' cultural backgrounds, these schools helped students construct fluid new cultural practices that in some ways resembled, and in some ways transcended, cultural practices from both their home countries and the United States. We refer to this concept as *transculturación*. Instead of focusing on the traditional classroom and school academic context and the individual learner, these schools, following a Latino system of *compadrazgo* enacted a *transcollaboration* among students, and between students and educators, teachers and administrators, and the school and community beyond school walls. Finally, rather than solely tracking the students' standardized test scores in English, teachers in these schools observed and assessed students deeply, as they used their entire linguistic, cultural, and sociocognitive repertoire to learn. Thus, these teachers *transacted* learning and relationship with students *through dynamic assessments*.

Transcaring created the fluid identities that Latino youth need, the "differential consciousness" (Sandoval, 2000) that permits Latino students to live within, yet beyond the demands of dominant ideologies of monolingualism and monoculturalism, and among varying power bases. In many ways, these four transcaring strategies create third spaces where Latino students emerge not simply as Spanish-speaking Latin Americans or as English-speaking North Americans, but as bilingual and transcultural U.S. Latinos. To enable this positioning and identification, educators in these schools built Latino students' translanguaging and transcultural performances and created a sense of *compradazgo* and extended learning community, while transacting learning and relationships through dynamic

assessments. We now turn to showing how these four transcaring strategies emerged from our data.

Translanguaging and Bilingualism in Education

One of the major findings of this study was the pervasive presence of bilingualism in all of the schools observed, regardless of their official program designation as reported to the New York City Department of Education. These schools challenged the traditional dichotomy of bilingual education versus ESL and adopted flexible language policies that embraced the fluid language practices of students as the starting point for learning. We are calling these more flexible language policies *bilingualism in education*—a shift in paradigm from one that is about fidelity toward a particular model (bilingual education or ESL) toward a paradigm that is about adapting instruction to best meet the needs of Latino students across the continuum of bilingualism through strategic and flexible use of fluid language practices. This bilingualism in education was facilitated by schoolwide structures that gave teachers the autonomy and support in implementing linguistically responsive instruction.

The schools' language practices reflect what we have called elsewhere translanguaging (see García, 2009; García, Flores, & Chu, 2011; García, Flores, & Woodley, 2012). Translanguaging refers to the complex discursive practices of all bilinguals, and the pedagogies that build on these discursive practices to release ways of speaking, being and knowing of bilingual subaltern communities (García, 2009, in press). Translanguaging has the potential to break the hegemony of English in ESL classrooms, and the strict separation of languages in bilingual classrooms. It refers to bilingualism being used flexibly in order to "make sense" of teaching and learning, communicate and appropriate subject knowledge, and develop academic language practices. In addition, translanguaging transgresses the gap between, on the one hand, the global designs of the United States and its public education system that imposes English only, especially the academic standard, and on the other hand, the local histories of U.S. Latino students who language differently. By translanguaging, students and teachers validate the bilingual practices of U.S. Latinos, use local language practices as ways of educating these students whose home language practices differ from those of schools, and extend those practices to incorporate the academic language practices taught in school.

Two examples from two very different schools demonstrate what this bilingualism in education looks like. The assistant principal at School B (interview, April 8, 2010), a school officially designated as TBE and serving an almost exclusive emergent bilingual student population, described the school's LAP as follows:

So the language allocation policy is that certain courses are going to be taught in English, but I actually think it's fine that they go back and forth between English and Spanish because, for example, I'll have math teachers saying, 'I don't really care what language it's taught in, as long as the students get the content. It doesn't matter. They have to know the content. And I'm not going to withhold Spanish from my students if that means that they're not going to get the content. And the students are, of course, allowed to take the exam in Spanish[5] and most do.'

This assistant principal noted the importance of ensuring content mastery and supported her teachers in using both languages.

And yet, it was not just schools with bilingual education programs where this type of flexible language use was observed. The principal of School E (interview, April 8, 2010), a school with an officially designated ESL program that serves a more heterogeneous population in terms of language proficiency, described the role of bilingualism at his school as follows:

We cater to our clientele. Depending on the class/teacher, Spanish is used to the extent necessary. If English can be used, English will be used. The goal is that eventually, by the end of the term, for them to speak English sufficiently. Of course that doesn't happen for all students, but they all come out stronger at the end of the year than they were at the beginning.

In this school, despite its official designation as ESL, the leadership saw an important role for translanguaging in helping Latino emergent bilingual students catch up to their English-speaking peers. While school leadership was essential in providing the space for these flexible language allocation policies, it was classroom teachers who created classroom environments that facilitated fluid language practices. Below are three examples of how teachers went about doing this.

A humanities teacher at School G, teaching an officially designated English-medium class, used several translanguaging strategies. As students in the 9th-grade class read *The Emperor's New Clothes*, the teacher not only provided versions of differing difficulty in English, but also presented versions in Spanish and Mandarin, the two largest language groups in the class. Students were given the chance to read the version they preferred, and then were given the opportunity to discuss the gist of the story in groups that spoke Spanish or Mandarin, before discussing the themes of the story and answering comprehension questions in English. Even during this answering of questions,

students were continuously using their home language groups to support their meaning-making of the text.

A Global History teacher at School C, teaching an officially designated TBE class, implemented similar strategies for a class of advanced emergent bilingual Latino students, some feeling stronger negotiating academic texts in English, while others more comfortable negotiating academic texts in Spanish. Students were placed into groups of four in order to complete a jigsaw activity on the culture of Ancient Greece. Textbooks were available in English and Spanish, and the corresponding page numbers for each section were on the board. Each group was able to choose in which language they wanted to read the information. Some groups chose to read in Spanish, while others chose to read in English. This paralleled the choices they made for writing, with those who had chosen the Spanish textbook, writing their responses in Spanish, while those who had chosen the English textbook, writing their responses in English. However, both languages were used for oral communication within each of the groups. Both languages were also used to debrief their answers with the class.

A final example was observed in an officially designated English-medium Living Environment classroom at School F, which also consisted exclusively of emergent bilingual students. In this classroom, students were observed reading from an English text, translating the questions for their classmates, and answering the questions in Spanish. The teacher encouraged the students to use their Spanish to get to English, pointing out cognates such as "parasite," in addition to allowing students to make meaning of the dense English text through Spanish. This allowed students to understand the content better, and it made explicit how language skills transfer from one language to the other. This also had the affective consequence of boosting students' self-esteem in their emergent bilingualism.

This translanguaging was observed not only in English-language classrooms, and in bilingual content classrooms, but also in the spaces that some principals had set up to develop the academic Spanish language of these students—the Native Language Arts class. For example, in School F during a Native Language Arts class in Spanish, the teacher guided students through a lesson on constructing complete sentences. Although the class was facilitated in Spanish, and students provided examples of sentences in Spanish, the teacher deliberately took the time to make connections to sentence construction in English and pushed students to translate each exemplar sentence that was given. As the teacher wrote each student example on the board, she asked the students in Spanish to label the subject and action. Then she had the students translate the sentence into English and to label again the subject and

action followed by an explanation of why these labels fit each specific part of the sentence. Students were given the option of explaining their labels in either English or Spanish, thus allowing for translanguaging in both the written and oral knowledge production throughout this class.

In using bilingualism flexibly, these schools are not only advancing content knowledge and language skills in both English and Spanish, but they are supporting the students' linguistic performances as they take up identities that are flexibly bilingual, and not simply Spanish-only or English-only. The same can be said of cultural practices, which is the subject of the next section.

Transculturación in Culturally Transforming Pedagogy

The schools in our sample used Latino culture and history as an important source in educating these Latino youth. But rather than bringing Latino students back to their "source," as Rivera & Pedraza (2000) argue, these schools used "border pedagogies" (Elenes & Delgado Bernal, 2010) that affirmed students' ability to straddle cultures and to perform features of what might be considered different "national cultures" as their very own in interaction with each other. The source for these students was precisely a third space which they were constructing, and not one or another "land."

The teachers in the effective schools that we studied went beyond culturally responsive pedagogies and used instead culturally *transforming* pedagogies, as they constructed the third spaces in which U.S. Latino students situated themselves. In so doing, schools aimed to move students not toward an American acculturation or a Latin American static identity, but toward a "*transculturación*" in the sense posited by Cuban ethnologist Fernando Ortiz (1940). In his book, *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar*, Ortiz explains that *transculturación* does not simply mean acquiring a different culture, but refers to the process of change that accompanies all cultural contact. He adds, "In all embraces of cultures there is something of what happens in the genetic copulation of individuals: the child always has something of both progenitors, but it is always different from each of them" (p. 96, our translation). Thus, in these schools, the emphasis was on getting the students to use mirrors—reflections of their lives and experiences in the curriculum—as well as windows—new perspectives and access to the larger world (Gutiérrez, 2007) to shape new U.S. Latino subjectivities. Examples of culturally transforming pedagogies focused on how teachers, schools, and students brought these mirrors into the classrooms, in order to reflect the

windows that transform static cultural images and identities, and in so doing provided students with the investment to acquire and develop new language and cultural practices and extend their knowledge and understandings.

Culturally transforming pedagogies were prevalent in these schools. For example, students in several schools worked through literary analysis with texts that were culturally significant for students. Some of the titles included *Down These Mean Streets* (Piri Thomas), *When I Was Puerto Rican* (Esmeralda Santiago), *Bodega Dreams* (Ernesto Quiñonez) and *Drown* (Junot Díaz). By reading books that focused on the Latino experience in English, teachers enabled cultural "crossings" (Rampton, 1995) that construct a third space of cultural transformations. Extending Rampton (1995), we believe that this kind of cultural crossing creates a movement across linguistic and ethnic lines which enables students to act on different identifications within a fluid third space.

Teachers in our schools also built and extended students' personal experiences and interests when choosing class reading. For example, they included such books as *Warriors Don't Cry* (Melba Beels) about the Little Rock High School integration, and *The Last Shot* (Darcy Frey) about the lives of four African American high school students who were basketball players. Teachers moved students across ethnic and racial lines, as well as social contexts and time frames. By confronting issues of racism, otherness, and social justice with other people, at other times, teachers enabled more fluid U.S. Latino subjectivities. As students became comfortable putting their own identities alongside those of others, and transforming them in a third space of encounter, they became better equipped to move on to classic literary works that draw on these same themes. By putting all these texts alongside each other, and having students draw from this expanded repertoire, new cultural and linguistic practices emerge.

Throughout lessons and class discussions, teachers in these schools made connections to students' cultures in order to enhance understanding, but also to bring them to a new space where cultures coexist and are transformed. For example, a teacher at School C made connections between Greek history and students' lives in New York and Latin America, evoking images of sporting stadiums and financial inequities of seating options in Latin America and New York. When the conversation changed to the Greek tragedy of *Oedipus Rex*, the teacher enhanced student understanding of both themes and plot by connecting the drama, relationships, and authors' purposes to *telenovelas* that students watched in U.S. Spanish-language television.

In these schools students come to see their cultural, linguistic, and social worlds not as a static reality, but as reality in process, in transformation. How

this happens through transcollaboration of students, educators, parents/family and community is the subject of the next section.

Transcollaboration and *Compadrazgo* Among Participants and Communities

A common thread across the schools was a culture of teamwork and transcollaboration that follows the notion of Latino *compadrazgo* (Baca Zinn & Kelly, 2005). *Compadrazgo* refers to a system of godparents and coparents who offer support and guidance to those without blood ties. As a result, large intertwined supportive familial networks are created among administrators and teachers, teachers and students, students themselves, educators in school and parents/families, and educators in schools and others in community organizations. In extending this *compadrazgo* within and beyond school walls, educators are building a third space that transcends differences within school and between school and communities. Through transcollaboration strategies, these schools are enabling U.S. Latino students to function within and beyond the dichotomies of dominant and subaltern linguistic and cultural practices.

Rather than being autocratic and top-down, administrators in these effective schools favor more democratic approaches to school governance. Through transcollaboration, networks of *compadrazgo* were created. While playing an active role in the shaping of the vision of their school, these principals empowered teachers to take ownership of much of the day-to-day decision making, and encouraged teachers to develop similar dynamics with their students. As one principal (School G, interview, March 30, 2010) described:

> Teams are the backbone of the school—instructional, in terms of social emotional support for students, the teams are the skeleton that everything else in the school functions on . . . . The whole idea is that the people who are closest to the students are the ones with the best information and who can make good decisions about what to do for their students. Now again, it has to be balanced, there has to be some unifying vision and some unifying philosophy for the whole school . . . [but] they need to be able to work without me. I can't be the reason that teams work, both on a practical level and a philosophical level.

For this principal, democratic governance was essential to effective pedagogical approaches. He saw his role as providing a clear vision and collaborating with his teachers in implementing it, as opposed to hierarchically

imposing this vision on staff and students. This democratic governance was also reflected in the ways in which teachers were organized as teams, and given time in their schedules to collaborate. For example, School F reported having grade level meetings three days a week. At these meetings teachers were able to discuss student progress as well as any necessary interventions for particular students.

This collaborative environment of *compadrazgo* also trickled down into the classroom, where group work was observed in various forms. The effective schools in our study formed strong learning communities. Student collaborative group work sometimes was in the form of formal projects. However, perhaps most significantly, group work was also observed as part of normal classroom routine. For example, in a lesson on how to translate English phrases into algebraic equations in a Math class at School D, the students were expected to work in groups to come up with three words that fit under the categories of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. Students were also observed helping each other on a regular basis throughout the class period. The same was observed in another Math class at School C, where students were never told to work together, but naturally did it, as they solved problems. In these two classrooms, and in many others observed in these schools, collaborative group work was the norm, as opposed to something done on special occasions.

In each of the schools, the support for students stretches beyond the classroom walls and involves transcollaboration of the educators with parents, family, and community. Each school mentioned the need to foster communication with parents of *all* students, not just the ones in danger of failing or "getting in trouble." Bilingual services were a large part of facilitating parental and family involvement. Every school mentioned the use of Spanish in parent meetings, and schools have meetings and family events held in Spanish. Counselors also worked with parents to meet their linguistic needs by translating foreign transcripts and aiding in the process of transferring credits from other countries.

The schools also involved parents and guardians in school activities. At School F, there were parent workshops held in Spanish, with topics such as positive communication with teens, gang awareness, navigating the NYC school system, and open panels in which parents asked questions, such as how to prepare for college or obtain scholarships. School B and School C provided adult ESL at their school. These targeted outreach programs enabled adults to better support students, and provided access to information and opportunities. The role of the parent coordinator was also mentioned by each school as being

an integral part of family outreach and collaboration. Home visits by the parent coordinator were common, sometimes in conjunction with a counselor.

Transcollaborative learning communities also extend beyond the traditional school structure through extended services within schools and outside of school walls. Within schools, teachers tutored before and after school and on Saturdays based on student needs. Every school acknowledged the positive impact of academic and linguistic enrichment and support available for students. Many schools also offered support specifically for students with low literacy in Spanish because of interrupted formal education.

The schools' alternative structures of transcollaboration also enabled them to provide specific services to support college readiness and opportunities for students to explore and deepen their understanding of options for after high school. At School B, college readiness began in 9th grade for all students, with college visits and tours, career days, and special speakers for career awareness, in conjunction with opportunities for higher education. School B also participated in a competitive college preparatory program in collaboration with Ivy League schools, which brings in high-achieving students for academic, and extracurricular support, as well as help with college applications. At School C, the advisory period focused on college exploration, application, and readiness, as well as social-emotional learning, such as handling social pressures, real-world challenges and responsibilities.

Some of these schools go beyond their traditional responsibilities, transcollaborating with students who have children of their own. School C, for example, facilitated an alternate schedule for mothers so they can take their children to the in-school day care, which is not available until later in the morning. This enabled the mothers to continue their education without the time or financial burden of outside day care. Additional courses and credit-recovery was also offered in the summer to make up for any prolonged absences or maternity leaves.

Extracurricular activities are often absent in schools that Latino students attend (Gándara & Gibson, 2004). But these effective schools have made efforts to establish extracurricular programs, including athletics and creative opportunities. Creative and artistic opportunities were also available for students at each of these effective schools. Drawing on the wealth of cultural and creative institutions in NYC, groups such as Ballet Hispánico and various Afro-Caribbean dance troupes, theater, and music groups are involved in the schools. A teacher at School B described an increase in students' motivations for history and literature after they participated in artistic programs. School clubs drew on student interests and built community. There were

multicultural clubs, language-focused societies, heritage/culture-based clubs, community service clubs, and school improvement groups.

Transcollaboration structures also existed with community-based organizations and clinics, government agencies, and higher education institutions. For example, studies have shown that Latinos have high rates of depression, which often go untreated (Delgado & Scott, 2006). These schools had targeted programs for mental health. School C had several guidance counselors on staff working directly with a local hospital and in collaboration with social workers, and there was a mental health clinic within the school available to students and families. School B also worked with outside community-based agencies for mental-health support, and individual and group counseling was available in school.

These schools also transcollaborate with other agencies. Latino emergent bilinguals were linked with programs at The Door (an agency that provides youth development services), Job Corps, Co-op Tech (cosmetology, EMS, culinary arts) in programs during school hours, but off school grounds. Gear-Up, in conjunction with Lehman College, was a significant program for some schools, providing students with a book club, conferences they can attend, and a college readiness program. Fordham University had a successful bilingual support program present in some schools, which enabled students to develop both academic Spanish and English. Other partnerships with community-based organizations included: The Police Athletic League, Urban Dove, New York Cares, Alianza Dominicana, the Puerto Rican Family Institute, the Jewish Board, Children's Aid Society, Centro de Desarrollo de la Mujer Dominicana, Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center, Sloan Kettering, and Urban Partnership. There were also significant partnerships with various campuses of The City University of New York. This transcollaboration of school and community helped Latino emergent bilinguals draw from their entire range of resources, both in and out of school, to perform academically and socially in ways that helped them grow beyond their static position as English language learners to which they are often relegated in other schools.

These transcollaborative practices that go beyond traditional classroom and school structures also reinforce, as well as are created by, the straddling of language and cultural practices, the translanguaging and transculturación, that we discussed above. It is when these transcollaborative practices are extended to assessments so that they can build on the practices of out-of-school communities that there is academic achievement. The next section discusses how educators and students in these schools used dynamic assessments for transacting teaching and learning that led to success.

Transacting Through Dynamic Assessment

For most Latino emergent bilingual youth, standardized tests present a challenge that is responsible for much educational failure (Menken, 2008). Yet a characteristic of all of these effective schools was the presence of dynamic assessment practices that were used to transact teaching and learning. While the term "data driven instruction" has become common in education and no school would claim to not use data-driven instruction, these schools all demonstrate how the strategic use of assessment, along with support in helping teachers interpret data received from assessments, can be used to support Latino emergent bilinguals. All of these schools challenge static conceptions of assessment, by utilizing assessment as a dynamic process that creates a third space where students can draw on their different language, cultural, schooling, and community practices to maximize learning.

The assistant principal of School B (interview, April 8, 2010) provided a description of how her school used data to inform instruction:

> They actually looked at who was stagnated for 2-3 years and hadn't moved from beginner to intermediate [on the NYSESLAT, the exam used in New York State to determine students' English language proficiency]. So they worked with the students, and we have a genre study in English where one of the things that was identified by looking at the students' Regents exams and also by looking at some of the essays they'd done for the genre studies, an item analysis was done, and found that the biggest problem the students had with writing the essays was maintaining a controlling idea. . . . So what was determined was that we need to work with these students on controlling ideas.

The Assistant Principal continued to describe how the school goes beyond standardized assessments, with teachers of ESL, English Language Arts, and Spanish Native Language Arts collaboratively designing assessments based on the academic language skills needed in their particular units. All teachers then administered the same assessments after every unit, and used the same rubric to identify the strengths and weaknesses in academic language of their students.

This same procedure was observed at School C, where all ESL and English Language Arts teachers for the same grade level were given common prep periods to do item analyses of interim assessments. The teachers then had to identify the areas of strength and weakness of the students and collaboratively come up with strategies to modify their instruction to better meet their

needs. In all of these schools, teachers were given support in closely examining student assessments and coming up with plans of actions to ensure that students moved to a space where they could draw on their new linguistic and cultural practices to show their capacities and abilities.

These schoolwide structures had a significant impact on how assessment was used at the classroom level. They supported teachers in creating classroom assessments that were dynamic and responsive to the language and cultural practices of U.S. Latino students. These dynamic assessment practices had three characteristics: (1) flexible use of language in assessment, (2) assessment as an ongoing process, and (3) differentiating assessment to meet the needs of individual students.

The first of these components is flexible use of language, which connects back to our finding on translanguaging and the presence of bilingualism in education. Especially in content area classrooms, teachers were interested in assessing content mastery as opposed to English language proficiency, and therefore, encouraged students to use all of their language resources to demonstrate content knowledge. For example, in a science classroom in School F, students were expected to read passages in English, but their written responses could be in English, Spanish, or a combination of the two. Similarly, in a science classroom in School C, though the official language of instruction was English, students were able to complete the assessment in English and/or Spanish.

The second way to transact with Latino emergent bilinguals through dynamic assessments was to consider assessment as an ongoing process, rather than a one-shot deal. The assistant principal at School B (interview, April 8, 2010) described how teachers at her school have adopted this approach to interim assessments:

> After they have done the assessments, the teachers give them back and say, "Okay so you did your draft. These were the mistakes you made. You need to redraft it, fixing the errors in these specific areas." And so it's a learning experience also. Not just an hour that everybody resents being taken from their teaching time and serves no purpose. So we're really kind of thrilled with how that's working out.

This on-going process allowed for assessment to be used in ways that improved the education of Latino emergent bilinguals, as opposed to being used to penalize and fail these students for not having mastered the skills being assessed.

The third component of the dynamic assessment practices observed in the classrooms was differentiation of assessments to meet the needs of individual students. One way that ESL and English Language Arts teachers did this was

through the use of *Achieve 3000*, a computer-based program that assesses the reading level of students and matches them up with nonfictional texts that match their reading level. Yet schools went beyond prepackaged programs and devised their own differentiated assessments. For example, an ESL teacher at School F described how she allowed students to choose from eight different projects that touched on different learning styles as the culminating assessment for their independent reading of books, which were assigned based on their reading level. The Assistant Principal of School B gave another example when she said that beginner English speaking students were graded based on the standard rubric for everybody but also based on a beginner rubric, which was the one that was used to calculate their grade. That way, both the teachers and the students had a sense of where these students were with regards to the grade-level standards as well as take into account their language proficiency.

Dynamic assessments for Latino emergent bilinguals in these schools were not divorced from their language and cultural practices. In fact, they were used to transact a third space where differences were made visible as content mastery is performed, and where students gave voice to their emergent bilingualism as they put Spanish, but also English, alongside each other.

Clearly the way in which educators in these schools stretched schools' language, culture, structure, and ways of assessing had to do with the care they showed their students. But our data makes evident that this care was not just about affirming students within a traditional personal or school culture. Rather this caring was about *straddling* languages, cultures, and modes of knowing and performing in the borderlands in which these immigrant students live. Transcaring for us is precisely the educational care that supports the construction of U.S. Latino translanguaging and transculturing, while ensuring the transcollaboration of all in the education and assessment of Latinos in ways that reflect their diverse and fluid language and cultural practices. Transcaring educational strategies place the fluid ethnolinguistic identities of Latino emergent bilinguals at the center of the schooling process and support students in the construction of U.S. bilingual identities that go beyond traditional national, cultural, and linguistic borders.

Conclusion

By mediating ideological and programmatic constraints that U.S. schools often exhibit, the effective schools in our sample "capitalize on rather than devalue their [Latino students] cultural resources" (Moll & Ruiz, 2005, p. 2). And yet, their transcaring strategies move these Latino adolescent newcomers,

as well as their teachers, beyond static concepts of Latino language, culture and ability. As a result of these transcaring strategies, Latino emergent bilinguals in these schools are able to move along a bilingual continuum, adjusting their language and cultural practices to the many different contexts in which they learn and live. These effective schools have been able to create a third space where tensions generate potential, and power positions between teachers and students are equalized.

In this article, we have presented evidence of what works in high schools that effectively educate Latino emergent bilinguals. We have shown how our data points to translanguaging, *transculturación*, transcollaboration, and transactions with dynamic assessments as the *transcaring strategies* that supported the success of these schools with Latino students. It is important, however, to recognize that this study only included public high schools in NYC, a place with unique Latino demographic and a distinct sociopolitical educational context. Despite this limitation, it is very possible that these findings may be generalizable to other educational contexts across the United States.

High schools that transcare offer Latino students the option of a third space that transcends the notion of first and second languages, first and second cultures, and traditional school and assessment structures. Schooling as transcaring can support U.S. Latinos' fluid and multiple subjectivities, especially as they become bilingual. Transcaring in education thus has the potential to equalize the power relations and the social, linguistic and cultural hierarchies that have marginalized Latinos, and especially emergent bilinguals, as the Other.

Notes

1. The term "emergent bilingual" (García, 2009; García & Kleifgen, 2010) is used here to refer to those that the federal government calls Limited English Proficient and that others identify as English Language Learner; that is, those who are at the initial stages of acquiring English. We choose the term because it emphasizes that in acquiring English, students are developing bilingually, and that bilingualism exists within a continuum, rather than as a fixed category.

2. This article describes results that are part of a larger study, LAT-NYHS (García et al., 2010), which looked at the education of Latino youth in New York City High Schools.

3. New York State has in the past given the option of a Regents-endorsed diploma (with students having to pass 5 graduation exams with a 65) or a local diploma (where the pass grade in the 5 exams is 55). The local diploma is scheduled to be phased out in June, 2012.

4. In theory these "dual language" programs are two-way bilingual programs, but in practice most might be better called one-way developmental bilingual education programs. With one or two exceptions, "dual language" programs in New York City are only found at the elementary level.

5. New York State translates the content graduation exams in Math, Science, Global History and U.S. History into five languages, including Spanish. For more on this, see Menken, 2008.

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