DIALOGIC TEACHING AND MULTILINGUAL COUNTERPUBLICS

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Abstract

This article explores what happened when we co-constructed language and literacy curricula with Latina/o immigrant families and youth in two interrelated community-based educational classes as part of a research partnership with a diverse Catholic Parish. We employ theories of publics/counterpublics to characterize the participants' racialized and criminalized experiences within the dominant public discourse on immigration, as well as their agency in resisting such framings. We argue that adopting an inquiry stance into our practice, which situates teaching within larger sociopolitical contexts and power dynamics and encourages self-reflexivity, was a necessary component for our dialogic pedagogy. Our findings illustrate how participants mobilized their cultural resources for social critique through learning experiences that reflected community concerns, and promoted civic engagement. We conclude by identifying four ways in which we were able to create the conditions for dialogic teaching that tapped into participants' multilingual counterpublics.

Keywords: counterpublic, identity, Latina/o immigrants, literacy, multilingualism

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One Saturday morning in the Fall 2012, Latina/o families, their young children, and members of our university-based research team gathered for the first meeting of what would become an intergenerational class around language learning and literacy. The parents had immigrated to our Northeastern city from Mexico and were involved in St. Frances Cabrini (all names are pseudonyms), a multilingual, multiethnic Catholic Parish with which we have been cultivating a now-six year research partnership. Parents had expressed a desire for classes where they could learn English and work together to support their children's education. The families also shared challenges they faced in navigating broader issues that were impacting their lives, including xenophobic and anti-immigrant policies, monolingual ideologies, labor exploitation, and the upheaval of the public school system in the city.

Our orientation to partnering is derived from frameworks that recognize and seek to learn from the knowledge of linguistically minoritized and racialized communities (Alcoff, 2006; Campano, 2007; Moya, 2002) and that value collaborative inquiry and dialogic pedagogies (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Juzwik, Borsheim-Black, Caughlan, & Heintz, 2013; Freire, 1970; Simon, Campano, Broderick, & Pantoja, 2012). Rather than "deliver" knowledge to the Latina/o parents and their children as determined by the teacher's goals, a monologic feature of many literacy programs aimed at immigrant families (Tinkler, 2002; Whitehouse & Colvin, 2001), we hoped to create a space for mutual learning/teaching that would be enriched by multiple perspectives (Mohanty, 1997) and participatory approaches (Auerbach, 1989; Freire, 1970). Such a pedagogy views all participants in this space as "critical cultural researchers and actors" (Freire, 1985, p.98) committed to "on-going engagement in dialogue and a mutual answerability" (Renshaw, 2004, p.6).

Dialogic teaching is concerned with "help[ing] participants share and build meaning collaboratively" (Lyle, 2008, pg. 225). During our first inquiry group session, we asked families to reflect on what had worked well for them in previous language learning contexts, what brought them to the group, and what goals they envisioned for our time together. Families mentioned a range of aspirations that emphasized both specific skills in English, such as verb conjugations and pronunciation, as well as communicative purposes such as "hablar con mi jefe [y] con la maestra de mi hija" [talking with my boss or with my daughter's teacher], "ir a las citas del doctor" [going to medical appointments], or "buscar trabajos" [looking for jobs]. At the end of class, Ángela, one of the moms, approached us to share several concerns. She worked on alternate Saturdays, she told us, and would thus not be able to come on a weekly basis. We also learned that she, like the other parents, walked a half hour with her young children to get to the parish, even in inclement weather and during the winter months. Ángela ended the conversation by telling us that she hoped there wouldn't be a focus on her life, as had been the case in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes she had attended in the past. She wanted to learn English, she emphasized, not just discuss her experiences.

Ángela's caution about the relationship between teaching/learning and her personal narratives underscores important tenets of dialogic instruction. As Freire

(Freire & Macedo, 1995) emphasizes, dialogic teaching views dialogue not as a confessional of one's experience, which interprets individual narratives within a psychological framework. As members of a minoritized community that is criminalized as potential "illegals," we speculate that course participants may be rightfully concerned about how their narratives might position them as victims or, worse, could even be used against them. Nor is dialogic teaching a mechanistic pedagogical structure. Rather, dialogue is "an epistemological relationship" (p. 379) and "the fundamental goal of dialogical teaching is to create a process of learning and knowing that invariably involves theorizing about the experiences shared in the dialogue process" (p. 381). Our initial meeting reminded us of the importance of listening to and valuing participants' knowledge and experiences and their goals for the class (Anderson, 2006), even when these ideas at times seemed in tension with our own instructional stance (Aukerman, Belfatti & Santori, 2008). It would also go on to inform other collaborative inquiries at St. Frances Cabrini, including participatory research with Indonesian and Latino youth (among them Ángela's son Pablo) who researched topics they identified as salient to their lives. Throughout these projects, dialogic teaching both provided a window into and became a vehicle for the inter-subjective process of conceptualizing issues that affect immigrant communities.

1. ARTICLE OVERVIEW

How do educators foster dialogic teaching when societal inequities may inhibit students' desires to share their perspectives and experiences? How can teachers create the conditions for genuine dialogue when there are stark power asymmetries both in the classroom and the larger context of participants' lives? This article explores what happened when we co-constructed language and literacy curricula with Latina/o immigrant families and youth in two interrelated community-based educational classes, a family literacy/ESOL class and a youth Community Researchers Project, both held at St. Frances Cabrini parish and its social justice center. We document how participants mobilized their cultural resources for social critique through learning experiences that reflected community concerns. We also argue that adopting an inquiry stance into our practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), which situates teaching within larger sociopolitical contexts and power dynamics and encourages self-reflexivity, was a necessary component for such a dialogic pedagogy.

In the first part of the paper, we employ theories of discursive publics/counterpublics to characterize the participants' marginalization as racialized and criminalized immigrants in the public sphere, as well as their agency in resisting such framings. We then describe how we were able to dialogically structure the classes to tap into multilingual counterpublics. From the family literacy/ESOL project where Ángela was a participant, we analyze our practice of sharing "Class News" as a means of collaborative inquiry and curriculum building around topics such as immigration, educational advocacy, and health concerns. From the Com-

munity Researchers Project, we analyze Pablo's (Ángela's son) approach to conceptualizing and carrying out research on vandalism that drew on community dialogue as a resource for learning about a nonfiction topic relevant to his life. We conclude by identifying four ways in which we were able to create the conditions for dialogic teaching that tapped into the intellectual resources of the community.

2. DIALOGISM AND COUNTERPUBLICS

Dialogic theory has a long intellectual genealogy that can be traced back to Socrates and extends to modern thinkers such as Bahktin (1984) and Freire (1970), who have had particular influence in the field of language and literacy education. Within classroom contexts, dialogic teaching is concerned with redistributing intellectual authority and creating learning opportunities that are not solely driven by the teacher's voice or agenda, but by the collision and refraction of multiple voices (Aukerman, Belfatti & Santori, 2008; Bhaktin, 1984; Nystrand, 1997), which are themselves historically shaped. A central consideration of dialogism is epistemic—it "assumes knowledge is something people do together rather than an individual possession" (Lyle, 2008, p. 225), and occurs collectively through the sharing of varied perspectives and ideas by class participants.

The cultural and historical nature of dialogue (Bahktin, 1984) invariably raises issues related to power and identity. The literature on counterpublics, we suggest, complements dialogic theory in its particular attention to how minoritized communities are impacted by dominant framings of their experiences. It helps us understand how what is voiced, and silent, in classroom discussions is shaped by larger social dynamics, prompting questions such as the following: Who is and who is not included in a particular dialogue and why? What other dialogues may be occurring around issues of equity and social justice to which educators may not be privy? What is the potential role of subordinated languages, knowledges, and perspectives in a dialogue? How does a dialogue change across multiple public spheres?

Habermas' (1991) foundational conceptualization of a public sphere where citizens engage in decision making through reasoned and dispassionate argumentation laid the groundwork to further investigate both the limits and possibilities of such deliberative democracy under conditions of power asymmetry and structural inequities. Some scholars, such as the feminist philosopher Young (2000), have challenged Habermas to think more expansively about what constitutes reasoned dialogue to include rhetorical and disruptive acts, such as street protests, which may reflect forms of communication arising from marginalized social locations. Others have suggested the ideal of a unitary and inclusive public sphere to be premature and utopian (e.g. Benhabib, 1996). How can, for example, individuals with undocumented immigration status engage safely and deliberatively about issues regarding their children's education and future aspirations if doing so may put them in risk of detention or deportation? The move to pluralize the public sphere to encompass multiple publics has been one way to account for the intersectional social issues that divide people and stymie dialogue across boundaries of

class, language, gender, race, (dis)ability, and citizenship status. Spanish language television, for example, with its own variety shows, news programs, and commercials for Latin American products, may be thought to speak to one public among many within U.S. conceptions of pluralism.

The degree to which various linguistic publics also map on to the experiences of racialized and minoritized identities raises the importance of affixing the term *counter* to publics, and to investigate the cultural and political work of what Fraser (1997) has termed *subaltern counterpublics*, the "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (p. 81). Counterpublics are not merely political in a narrow sense, but also reflect countercultures and alternative ways of being in the world not explicitly directed toward a concrete, shared political cause (Warner, 20012). Asen's helpful (2000) review of counterpublic theory argues that its focus should indeed be on "alternative discourse norms and practices," rather than attached solely to specific persons, topics, or places (p. 424). These discourses both "disclose(s) relations of power" while revealing how "participants in the public sphere still engage in potentially emancipatory affirmative practice with the hope that power may be reconfigured" (p. 425). Dialogic learning spaces that incorporate the counterpublic can help reconfigure power dynamics by providing openings for immigrant families and youth to make visible the struggles they face as well as their collective agency in working towards change.

3. LATINOS AND IMMIGRATION: DISCURSIVE (COUNTER)PUBLICS

Latina/o immigrant youth and families have been subject to a deficit orientation in public discourse (Buff, 2008; De Genova, 2004, 2005; Perea, 1997), particularly post-9/11, through dehumanizing language that interpellates them as having criminalized identities. Our local city newspaper, for example, frequently blasts headlines about "illegals." A recent article states:

> Those 'without documents' resent being called 'illegals,' but that's what they are…we do not welcome…people who disrespect our laws, sneak across our borders or overstay their visas. They are lawbreakers [Artifact excerpt, August 2014]

In the brief 600 word article, the law and illegality are referenced directly 22 times, 16 through mentions of "(il)legal," 2 "felons," 3 "criminal/crimes," 1 "arrest," and several other construction that denote illegality, such as "break in through a side window" or "sneaking" across the border. A local community organization that advocates for immigrant rights is labeled an "illegal immigrant enabler."

These characterizations of individuals with undocumented immigration status are prevalent in the public sphere. Scholars have argued that such positionings are tied to histories of racism and nativism (Huber, 2009), including the colonization of Mexico by the United States (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2010). Framings of the immigration debate target Latina/o communities with undocumented status (Chávez,

2008), circumscribing participation and belonging along demarcations of "nationhood" that are historically contingent and racialized. For example, in times of economic growth, the US has instituted programs to encourage border crossings in order to supply a cheap labor force, and many of the conditions that have resulted in current migration patterns were created through U.S. policies (Castro-Salazar & Bagley, 2010). The dominant public discourse of Latina/o immigration elides these histories and their links to racism and language ideology.

There are also alternative discourses around immigration taking place (e.g. Mangual Figueroa, 2012). At the multilingual Catholic parish that is the site of our research partnership, advocating for immigrants is part of "protecting human dignity" [Interview excerpt, Sister Ana, 2012]. In a letter to parishioners printed in the weekly multilingual church bulletin, for example, the Msgr. invites all members of the faith community to dialogue about this issue:

> [H]ear what other parishes through the U.S.A. are doing on behalf of the "undocumented." Our "undocumented" will be able to derive a bit of encouragement…and our "documented" (as in able to VOTE!) will learn ways that they might better live and reflect our Church's Social Teachings. Please come!

The Msgr. frames immigrant rights as a cause not only relevant to those vulnerable to deportations, but to the whole parish community. Through the use of quotation marks, his message makes visible the constructed nature of divisive language ("undocumented" & "documented"), and qualifiers like "our" promote a sense of inclusion and shared humanity.

Msgr. invokes a discourse that links parishes "throughout the USA" and diverse people (individuals with and without papers) who should all participate in a counterpublic dialogue around immigration.

3.1 Language, Culture, and Nationhood

Educational curricula for immigrants are too often governed by assimilationist ideologies that do not take into account the rich linguistic, cultural, and epistemic resources of students' multlingual counterpublics. For example, many ESOL classes encourage participants to downplay their language(s) and culture(s) in order to "belong" (Rivera & Lavan, 2012; Valdés, 1996), despite the fact that, because of racism and nativism, no amount of English learning may overcome their status as perpetual foreigners. We would characterize such pedagogical contexts as monologic. They reinforce the dominant discourses of the public sphere and are either unaware or actively police the multiple voices and perspectives of the counterpublic, including the ways that individuals' language practices may differ from "standard" varieties.

Monologic pedagogy and monlingualism go hand in hand. Yildiz (2012) argues that while the notion of an individual possessing an authentic and delineated "mother tongue" (in our case, a language other than English) would appear to value multilingualism, it actually reflects a Western monolingual paradigm whereby

language identity is used to determine inclusion/exclusion within geopolitical borders. Individuals in a postmonolingual condition (Yildiz, 2012) instead move across nations and languages and call into question the one-to-one correspondence between the two. Educational researchers have disrupted the monolingual-multilingual binary, characterizing it more as a continua (Hornberger, 2003) or as a social practice of translanguaging (García, 2009) whereby speakers make use of their bilingual repertoires in fluid ways that do not hew to idealized prescriptions or Eurocentric language standards. Immigrant youth and families like those in our research project have transnational experiences and language repertoires that are by nature border-crossing, and dynamic understandings of the relationships and tensions between monolingual and multilingual paradigms are needed to account for their hybrid language practices.

Many of the participants in our study, whose perspectives are often excluded from conventional civic participation due to immigration status, nonetheless engage in political activity, what scholars have referred to as Latino cultural citizenship (Rosaldo, 1987; Flores & Benmayor, 1997; Honeyford, 2013). Within these counterpublics, individuals can "claim space and social rights" (Flores, 2003), enacting definitions of belonging that contest the hegemony of civil society and the boundaries between citizen and non-citizen established by the state. Following Warner (2002), these alternative communities are not organized solely around a political cause (for example, immigration rallies), but also entail cultural and linguistic practices. Delgado Bernal, Alemán, & Carmona (2008) examine how culturally-situated literacies such as *testimonios* and *pláticas*, and the multilingual practices that are needed to navigate and claim rights to across spaces, help Latina/o families and children construct alternative notions of belonging. These discursive communities constitute a counterpublic premised on cultural practices that define citizenship apart from the nation-state. They may work to create solidarity across groups (e.g. "documented and undocumented") while, by their very existence, presenting a challenge to dominant ideologies that criminalize Latina/os. We believe educators working with historically disenfranchised communities ought to consider such counterpublics in their dialogic teaching.

4. METHODOLOGY

For the past six years, we have been involved in a research partnership with St. Frances Cabrini parish and its school and community center. St. Frances Cabrini is a central gathering place for immigrant and refugee communities from Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Latin America, and has a long-standing Italian American congregation as well as African American members who played an instrumental role in desegregating the church. It offers services in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Indonesian, and occasionally Tagalog, and provides opportunities for the different communities to sustain cultural traditions, such as through native language youth groups and celebrations for *Día de los Muertos* and the Vietnamese Moon Festival. The parish brings cultural groups together for worship, civic engagement,

and socializing. Its mission includes advocating for immigrant rights and more expansive notions of citizenship to counteract the struggles many congregants face because of their undocumented status. St. Frances Cabrini promotes an ethos of radical hospitality, and strives to provide a safer space for individuals who are stigmatized within other contexts of their lives.

The overall research partnership investigates how multilingual community members organize to provide resources for their families, and the language and literacy practices they employ in negotiating social, cultural, linguistic, and institutional boundaries. We are also interested in how people cooperate toward a shared vision of educational justice and immigrant rights. Our collaborative research combines traditional ethnographic methods (Erickson, 1986) with practitioner research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). We embrace as a working ideal a collaborative and transparent methodology where community members are involved throughout research process (Campano, Ghiso, & Welch, 2015). For the ethnographic component of our work, the four of us, alongside other graduate student members of the research team, have been immersed at St. Frances Cabrini several times per week, participating in parish events, attending leadership meetings, and developing a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of the site. As practitioner researchers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), we have also co-designed a series of nested participatory research projects with community members. These initiatives include a comics club for elementary students (conducted in yrs. 2-4 of the partnership), a language and literacy class for Latina/o families and young children (conducted in yrs. 2-4), a research group with Indonesian and Latina/o adolescents (conducted in yr. 4), and action research investigating community literacies and advocacy (conducted in yrs. 3-5).

When investigating our own practice around dialogic teaching, we adopted an inquiry stance. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) characterize an inquiry stance as "a worldview, a critical habit of mind" that locates teaching "within webs of social historical, cultural, and political significance" (p. 120). They argue,

> Fundamental to the notion of inquiry stance is the idea that educational practice is not simply instrumental in the sense of figuring out how to get things done, but also and most importantly, it is social and political in the sense of deliberating about what to get done, why to get it done, who decides, and whose interests are served. (p. 121)

Teaching does not occur in a vacuum, and even a seemingly mundane instructional move may be implicated in broader power dynamics. Adopting an inquiry stance shifted our focus from implementing classroom dialogic structures to interrogating under what conditions participants may or may not contribute to the discussion, and how what they choose to share or not share is informed by the multiple contexts of their lives.

This article analyzes data from a subset of the larger partnership—the ESOL class with Latina/o families (primarily mothers) and young children, and the Community Researchers Project (CRP), a participatory inquiry where Latina/o and Indonesian youth investigated issues in their community. The two projects share signifi-

cant overlaps: they were taking place concurrently and several participants in the family inquiry had children who were in the CRP; both involved dialogic instruction based on issues raised by participants; and participants in both projects were vulnerable due to their ascribed racialized and criminalized identities. We bring together these two projects, rather than focusing on one, to signal how dialogue is not bounded within in one space, but crosses multiple locations, people, and topics.

4.1 Data Sources and Analysis

Data sources included detailed fieldnotes of inquiry group sessions, artifacts (e.g. work produced during the sessions, parish bulletins, event flyers, local newspapers), audio-recorded interviews with community members and inquiry group participants, and researcher reflective memos. A focus on discourse (Fairclough, 2003) helps us examine, from our disciplinary vantage point, the language and literacy practices (Heath & Street, 2008) of participants. While we were interested in dialogue, we made the conscious decision not to audiorecord sessions in either of the projects because the nature of the conversation about immigration was sensitive and recording could have inhibited individuals from participating. Instead, we wrote detailed fieldnotes, trying to capture individual comments as much as possible.

Data sources were reviewed and analyzed thematically (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). We initially coded our data for the social and political issues participants raised within the inquiry group settings (including factors influencing their participation in and experiences with schooling), instances of coalition-building among differently-situated participants, and the language and literacy practices referenced within the inquiry groups. Data analysis was "a process of moving in analytic circles" (Creswell, 1998, p. 142) that involved an oscillation between generating categories inductively and examining the corpus through theoretical constructs (Erickson, 2004) in a recursive and iterative process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Having identified how participants raised issues of marginalization and also the ways they mobilized language and literacy practices to counter dominant discourses, we turned to the concept of publics and counterpublics to help further examine these dynamics. We returned to the data to understand how immigration was being constructed in the public sphere and within the counterpublic discourse communities of the inquiry groups. For instance, we tracked specific discursive constructions (Janks, 2010, p. 74-77), such as lexicalization of key concepts (e.g. "immigrant") that helped surface differences between framings (e.g. "illegal" vs. "without papers"). Following the monologic-dialogic distinction, we charted who was positioned as possessing knowledge, the underlying ideologies that circumscribed discussion, how inquiry group sessions were negotiated among participants, and moments of resistance that shifted the nature of the topics under study.

5. FINDINGS

Our analysis of the nested research projects spotlighted in this article—the ESOL class with Latina/o young children and families, and the Community Researchers Project with Indonesian and Latina/o youth—reveals two valences of community members' dialogic engagement: a critique of the systemic inequities and participation in a counterpublic that highlights transnational and multilingual knowledge. The following examples, one featuring Ángela and the other her son Pablo, illustrate the dialogic nature of the respective projects.

5.1 Fostering Dialogue through "Class News"

In the Latina/o family ESOL class (facilitated by María Paula and Alicia), we invited caretakers and young children to utilize multiple languages, literacies, and cultural practices to investigate pressing community issues. We employed a number of strategies to create teaching/learning opportunities where the knowledge and language practices of the Latina/o families were an integral part of the curriculum. For example, the 2-hour weekly sessions were facilitated in both Spanish and English, and we encouraged participants to use all their languages and language varieties for meaning-making. Pedagogical structures alternated between joint inquiries that involved both adults and young children working together, and times when each of the groups explored the same theme separately in age-appropriate ways. The participants transacted with real-world texts of their choosing, such as menus from pricey restaurants where they prepped food and notes from bosses at housecleaning services, to foreground their own questions and interrogate issues of power. They utilized their multiple perspectives and their language and literacy resources to teach us and each other about critical issues in their lives while learning the English necessary to address day-to-day concerns. Such pedagogies aspired to cultivate a joint learning community that was not centered on the monologic transmission of skills as determined by the university-based facilitators. In fact, during the first months of our time together, one of the mothers brought in a Spanish-language grammar book to give to a graduate student helping out on the project, thus underscoring that there were skills to be learned by all involved and overturning preconceptions of who is considered a "language learner."

One generative routine for our ongoing inquiries was the "Class News". The mothers took turns going around the room and sharing any news they had that week, which were recorded on chart paper and used to spark discussion, teach specific language elements, or plan future inquiries. The Class News grounded our inquiry community in the issues facing families, and also provided opportunities to attend to the technical aspects of language and literacy learning parents had envisioned for the course (such as, for example, possessives and verb tenses). Written up, the Class News for each session can be thought of as a dialogically-constructed artifact. Each line represents a summary of each topic of conversation raised by the participants, rendered by the preferred phrasing of the person sharing.

One such artifact, depicted in Figure 1, is illustrative of the range of issues shared by families as they participated in this discursive counterpublic.

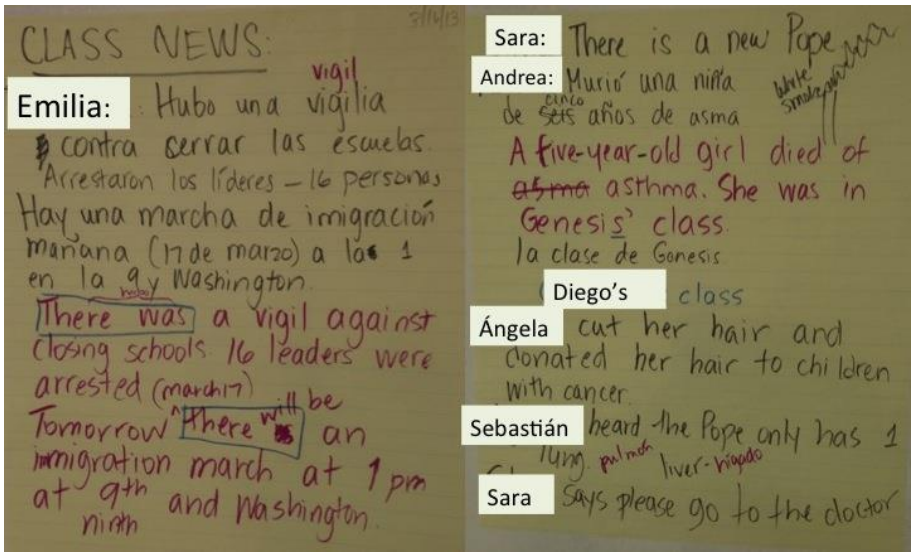

Figure 1. Sample Class News write-up

Emilia, a member of the inquiry group who was also actively involved in a Latina/o immigrant rights organization, began the Class News for this day by sharing two activist events. The first was a vigil against the closing of city public schools, at which 16 community leaders had been arrested. The protests were a response to the draconian school district budget cuts that would result, later that year, in the shutting down of 24 schools and a significant reduction of services, including nurses, social workers, teachers and other staff to some of the poorest areas of the city. The closing of schools was a recurring topic in our inquiry group. Parents were concerned, for example, about their ability to take the children to school without cars or drivers' licenses when public transportation was often unreliable, and about how the relocation away from their own neighborhoods would impact children's physical and emotional wellbeing. Julio, a kindergarten student, rejoiced in a Class News activity a few months later that "salvaron a mi escuela" [they saved my school] (Artifact excerpt, Feb. 2013), a testament to children's awareness of these issues and to the potential power of a collective action. Unfortunately, many schools were ultimately closed despite these efforts.

During this particular Class News session, Emilia spread the word about a march for immigrant rights, urging others in the group to attend. Scholars note that undocumented status exacerbates social duress through more intangible factors like fear of deportation or discrimination (Banki, 2013). Immigration status was a cross-cutting theme that impacted many of the issues participants identified, and it be-

came clear that participation in a counterpublic provided a degree of respite and solidarity for the families.

The discussion turned to health concerns when Andrea shared that a classmate of her daughter's had died a few days prior as a result of an asthma attack. Ángela was particularly alarmed because both she and her two children also suffered from asthma, and with budget cuts schools often lacked essential nursing staff. Health insurance was also difficult to come by given the contingent nature of their jobs and the labor exploitation that often occurs when immigrant workers have little alternative but to participate in the informal economy (Lopez, 2006). Sara shared that a friend had passed away because, without health care, her cancer had not been detected and treated in its early stages. This tragedy was compounded by the militarization of the border: Sara recounted that her friend's body could not be returned to the family she left behind in Mexico, including the son she had not seen since he was a baby. The conversation also prompted Sara to tell the group about a mobile health van that was coming to St. Frances Cabrini to conduct breast cancer screenings. One had to make an appointment in order to take advantage of this service, a task that intimidated many of the recent immigrants who could not communicate in English and were reluctant to write personal details on official forms. Sara nevertheless provided everyone with the name and number of a Spanish-speaking nurse involved in the initiative who would be able to assist in scheduling the exam. She chose to represent her contribution to the Class News chart with the phrase, "Sara says please go to the doctor." The Class News activity both made visible the social and economic struggles faced by Latina/o families, but also helped members of our inquiry group pool collective resources.

Joyful solidarity is also part of the dialogue of the counterpublic. Following the group's sobering conversation about death, family separation, and immigration, Ángela shifted the discussion, noting "tengo muchos pesares pero quiero compartir algo más positivo" [I have a lot of struggles but I want to share something more positive]. She went on to recount that she cut her hair and "donated it to children with cancer," a concrete action she could personally take to ease the suffering of others. Other joyful news included the birth of children or, on this occasion, the election of the first Latin American pope. The families saw this new leadership as an important turning point in the church, signaling greater representation of Latinos within an institution historically dominated by Europeans. Through dialogue around the Class News routine, the mothers, who were of Mexican descent, worked to construct a pan-Latina transnational identity whereby spiritual affiliations may transcend nationhood and immigration status. Drawing on the discursive counterpublic provided opportunities for all involved to participate in edifying dialogue, moments of mutual learning and affective connection.

Through the Class News routine, the Latina mothers were able to "disclose relationships of power" (Ansen, 2000, p. 24) not typically referenced in discussions of immigration within the dominant public sphere, emphasizing many intersecting social issues that affect their experiences as immigrants to the U.S. Their conversations made visible their vulnerability to neoliberal policies that erode social sup-

ports such as public schooling and healthcare. They noted, as well, the role that language ideologies and race played in these oppressions. One participant commented that she and her family experienced racism in the neighborhood school, where "se molestan que no hablen inglés pero ellos no pasan del ingles" [people get upset that one doesn't speak English but they don't go beyond English]. This comment captures the paradox of how Latina/os were being positioned as deficient due to their emergent knowledge of English, when in fact by acquiring the language they had surpassed the monolingual standard by which they were being judged. Being Mexican made this issue not merely linguistic, but racialized as well, and families made connections between these comments and assumptions regarding their immigration status. One of the mothers, Bendición, nonetheless encouraged her peers to speak up, exclaiming that "tenemos derechos" [we have rights], and that, moreover, "los niños tienen derechos" [the children have rights]. For the sake of their children, Bendición urged others to not walk with their heads lowered because of being Mexican, no matter what discrimination they may experience. Through their discussions, including those fostered in our Class News, the Latina mothers connected their lived experiences and concerns to a larger supranational discourse of human rights.

The mothers in the ESOL class both referenced and participated in a counterpublic dialogue that complicates the identities of "immigrant," and which, following Fraser (1997), allows them to create "oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs." These oppositional interpretations include shifting the focus from an individual who enters the U.S. "legally" or "illegally," to a systemic perspective that names racism, language ideologies, and economic inequality as part of the immigrant experience. Through a dialogic structure like the Class News, the Latina mothers reframe the debates about immigration, and in doing so, also advocate for their community's rights. As practitioner researchers at St. Frances Cabrini, we were able co-construct learning opportunities with the Latina/o families that enabled participants to negotiate meaning and connect their personal experiences to larger social, political, and historical dynamics.

5.2 Youth Research as Dialogic Inquiry

Every other weekend during the 2013-2014 school year, Latina/o and Indonesian youth between the ages of 10 and 14 gathered in the basement of St. Frances Cabrini's community center to explore high-quality nonfiction texts and research questions that arose from their own experiences and concerns. This participatory inquiry—the Community Researchers Project—understood the immigrant youth to be cosmopolitan intellectuals who inherited, through their communities, knowledge derived from legacies of social struggle and activism (Campano & Ghiso, 2011). Students learned about and utilized various research methodologies to investigate their own questions, and also saw their communities as sites of knowledge. A commitment to dialogic teaching meant that while we (Gerald and Grace, alongside other members of the research team) began the project with spe-

cific curricular guidelines, our pedagogy shifted in accordance with students' research directions.

For each session of the Community Researchers Project, we provided a collaborative structure and open-ended prompts which the youth could interpret in a range of ways (for example, by using different genres, modalities, and languages, and by situating questions within their own topics and experiences). Initially, the class sessions centered on exploring nonfiction texts and on surfacing a range of possible interests to research. As the sessions progressed, our guidance focused on choosing particular topics to investigate, planning for the inquiries, and discussing and representing on-going findings.

The Community Researchers Project was originally conceived at the request of parents at St. Frances Cabrini, who wanted to support their children in the curricular push for analyzing nonfiction that was part of new school standards (Campano, Ngo, & Player, 2015). Leaders from the various cultural communities at the parish met to co-design the project and to select the books to be used; more texts were added once the youth's inquiries were underway so they would have nonfiction resources to complement their investigations. The chosen texts resonate with the counterpublic discourse at St. Frances Cabrini and challenge deficit representations of the community prevalent in public framings. The books reflect the riches of the neighborhood (*When Marian Sang* [Ryan, 2002], about an African American operatic singer from the area; or *Neighborhood Odes* [Soto, 2005], a collection of poems blending English and Spanish), the unequal policies that impact historically minoritized groups (*Getting Away with Murder* [Crowe, 2003] unpacks the racialized killing of Emmett Till that was a catalyst for the civil rights movement; *Tenement* [Bial, 2002] and *Denied Detained Deported* [Bausum, 2009] showcase discriminatory treatment of immigrants), and the power of coalitions in working for social change (e.g. *As Good as Anybody* [Michelson, 2008], which depicts the partnership between Martin Luther King, Jr. and Abraham Joshua Hershel in fighting for civil and human rights).

The books selected in conversation with community leaders provided an interpretive landscape that highlighted community strengths and social struggles pertinent to the experiences of families and youth at St. Frances Cabrini, topics that are often excluded from official school curricula. For example, in *Denied, Detained, Deported* (Bausum, 2009), the immigration experience unsettles the legal/illegal binary reinforced in many media outlets in our city by calling attention to how policies can be misguided, exclusionary, or racist. A representative snippet from the introduction reads:

> These stories represent the dark side of U.S. immigration history. They aren't just isolated goofs of public policy, random mistakes made once and never repeated. They range from the deliberate exclusion of Chinese emigrants during the 19th century to the exploitation of Mexican workers during the 20th century. And they echo through the nation's history right up to the present day. (p. 10)

The "dark side" is a counter-story to positive images of the U.S. as a welcome refuge for immigrant communities, and the text strives to portray the systemic nature

of these policies through showcasing what they are not ("isolated", "random," a "goof", a "mistake"), asserting how "deliberate" (as opposed to unintended) they are, and naming their humanitarian consequences ("exclusion"; "exploitation") across time periods and cultural groups. By counterpoint, terms used to denote the individuals subject to these policies highlight their humanity: they are "emigrants" who leave a place of origin rather than being defined solely by the new place they enter and "workers" who make economic and social contributions. This framing of the immigrant experience that emphasizes work, human vulnerability, and human rights was also the type of discourse that circulated within the parish and across our respective projects. For example, the youth's research projects encompassed topics such as health care inequities, work conditions experienced by their families, and the rights for all to have access to a high quality education.

One of the students participating in the Community Researchers Project was Pablo, Ángela's ten year-old son. Across the year, Pablo demonstrated an interest in social justice. He brought up questions regarding violence in his neighborhood, school closings, and stop and frisk policies (Fig. 2).

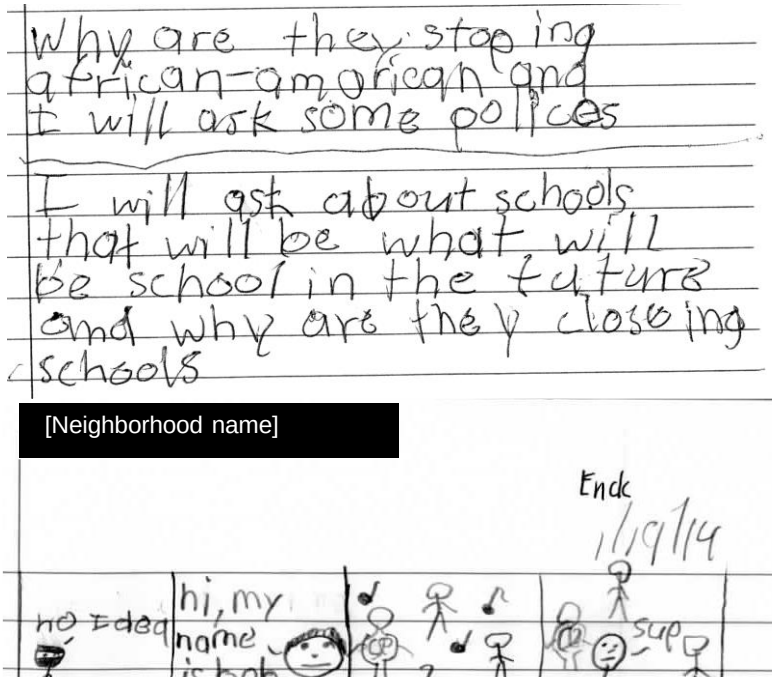

Figure 2. Pablo's jottings in his research notebook

Pablo's questions probe the systemic forces that produce gentrification, educational inequities, and the criminalization of people of color. Rather than locate blame on vulnerable populations, as would be the case through nominalizations (Janks,

2010, p. 74) such as "criminals" or "illegals," Pablo focuses on the process by which people become marginalized ("get[ting] shot or arrested" or being stopped by police). The use of specific pronouns can denote inclusivity or exclusivity (Janks, 2010, p. 76). Pablo uses the pronoun "they" to refer to systems of power that close schools or profile individuals of color, in contrast to his own identification as part of the community ("our" neighborhood). He repeatedly states, "I will ask," agentively characterizing himself as a researcher rather than one researched upon, with the modal "will" conveying certainty (Janks, 2010, p. 75) in his ability to pursue these social justice inquiries.

Pablo eventually settled on the question "Why do people vandalize?" based on his observations of the differences between the appearance of certain neighborhoods, which seemed to have a lot of public art, and his neighborhood, where, he noted, walls were covered with "just words on old buildings" (Fieldnotes, March, 2014). Throughout the project, Pablo gravitated to visual imagery, filling his notebooks with jottings and comics as a means of exploring ideas and recording his thinking. The focus of his research was a new topic for him, and blended his interest in aesthetics with social justice concerns. In our sessions, we provided time for youth to discuss with one another their emerging investigations, and then decide where they would take their inquiries next. We gave the following instructions: "Write or draw—what's the first step you're going to take after today to continue your research project?" Pablo decided to mine the affordances of visuals in responding to this curricular invitation (Fig. 3). Prior to this session, we had asked the youth to see how different authors represented their data in nonfiction books in order to inform how they might convey their findings, and Pablo and his peers had spent time sketching the layout of their books and thinking about what modalities (e.g. comics, pictures, graphs, verbal text) would best represent their information. While these activities possibly informed Pablo's spatial depiction of his research plan, his visual explorations throughout the Community Researchers Project also influenced our own teaching, making it more open to multimodal forms of inquiry.

Pablo's research plan roots his inquiries in his neighborhood, whereby his multilingual and transnational community is a site of knowledge generation. Through verbal and visual texts, the map traces Pablo's path as a researcher, pursuing his inquiry by linking with various people. He lists the first step as "interview my mom," and then draws himself into his research as a stick figure following a dotted line that leads him to interviews with community members and to consultations with his "research team". The completion of his research plan is marked by the words "mission complete." While many dominant paradigms of research depict a linear process, Pablo takes a circuitous route in order to meet face to face with the various informants in his neighborhood, a slow but intentional investigative trajectory.

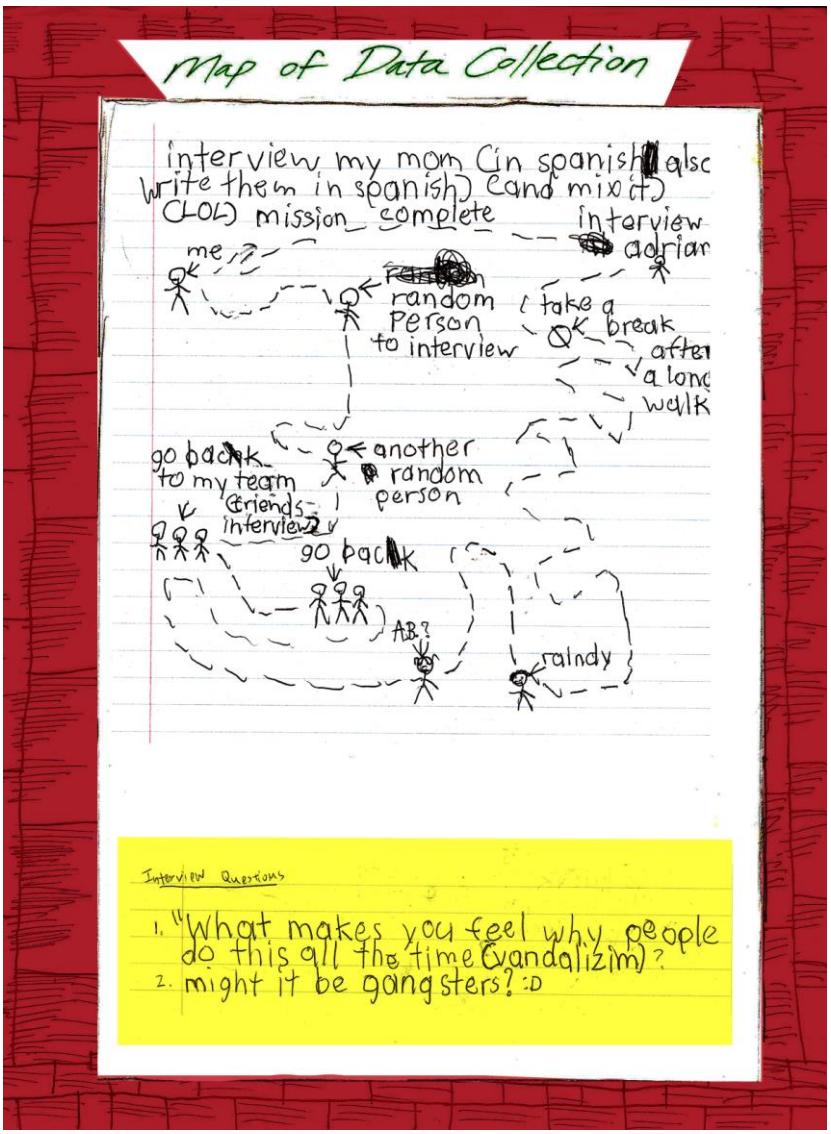

Figure 3. Pablo's map of data collection for his inquiry

Pablo's plan showcases the multiple linguistic resources he mobilizes in his inquiry and the dynamic nature of his language and literacy practices. He references his translanguaging practices (García, 2009) when he writes, "interview with my mom (in spanish also write them in spanish) (and mix it)." Pablo acknowledges his ability to communicate with the linguistically diverse members of his community as he "mixes" languages to both access and express the findings from his inquiry. This

assertion points to the postmonolingual condition (Yildiz, 2012) by challenging dominant notions of both "English Only" as well as of a "balanced bilingual" who does not "mix" languages. It reflects "an approach to bilingualism that is centered not on the constructed notion of standard languages…but on the practices of bilinguals that are readily observable" (García, 2009, p. 377). Pablo intends to use translanguaging and follows his plan the parenthetical "(LOL)", denoting his participation in youth culture and digital media. By "laughing out loud" at his proposition to "mix" languages, Pablo signals his awareness of how his language may be judged as deviating from a valued norm, and also his desire to engage in these practices nonetheless. Pablo's multilingual tongue does not belong to just one country, one community, or one culture. He can't be essentialized and to attempt to do so would deny him both access to and expression of his diverse social world.

In addition to his linguistic resources, Pablo's knowledge is also based on his participation in a dynamic community. The people he interviews share with him differing perspectives on "vandalism," and introduce the notion that people may "vandalize buildings to express themselves." His research report complicates a public view of graffiti by making a distinction between vandalism and public art (Fig. 4). Although he doesn't arrive at a critique of the systemic causes of vandalism, he nonetheless challenges purely deficit representations of city neighborhoods.

Pablo relies on many people in his qualitative inquiry. He names specific friends as well as a few "random person(s)" as interviewees. It is important to note that he doesn't reference the need to turn to books or the Internet for information. Instead, he sees his community as the primary source of knowledge. He draws on established relationships with community members but also displays a willingness to engage new people he may encounter to assist him in his scholarly pursuits. Pablo is both researching and cultivating membership in a counterpublic that, we speculate, may largely be excluded from the "public" of his public school. In the dialogic context of the Community Researchers Project, however, this counterpublic comes alive.

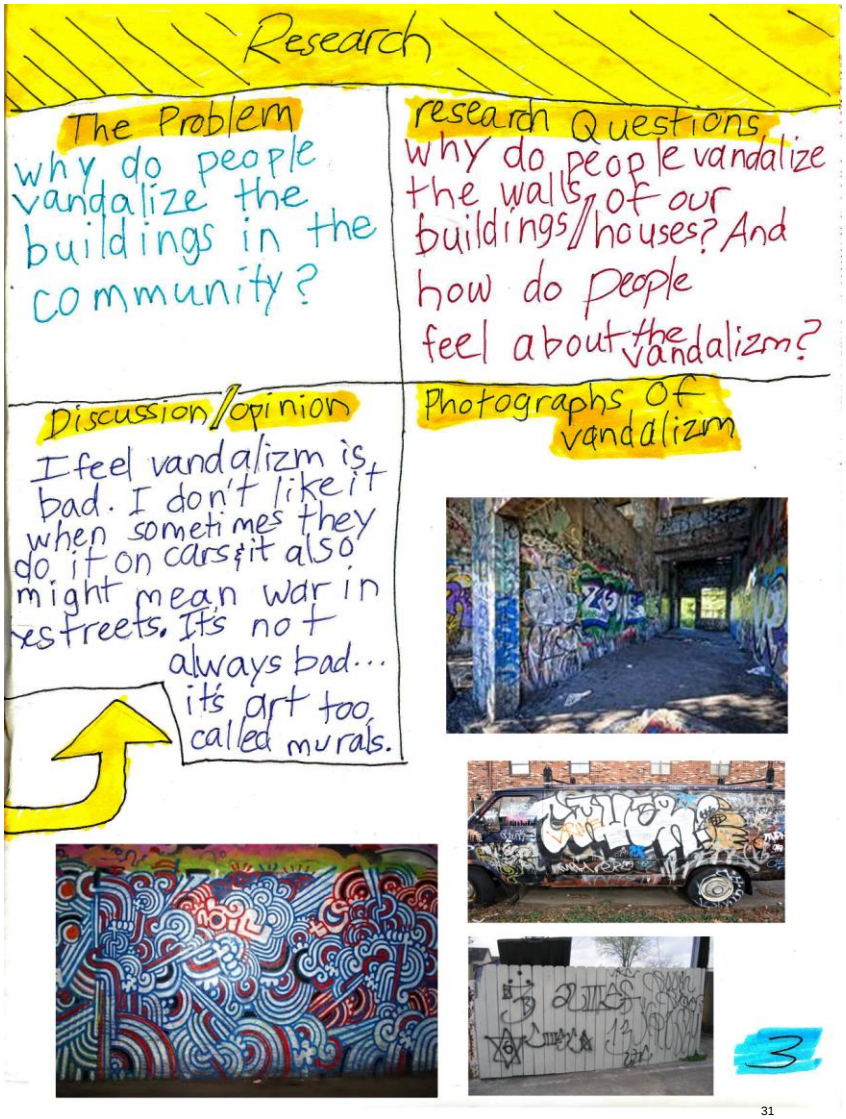

Figure 4. Pablo's summary of his research and findings

In both the family ESOL class and the Community Researchers Project, we sought to co-create learning spaces that were in dialogue with community members' knowledge and interests. Pablo and his mother Ángela, like others in our research project, navigate multiple and at-times contesting representations of immigration.

For example, they participate in a local activist organization, where Pablo has learned from testimonials of individuals with undocumented immigration status about the experiences of many in the Latina/o community, including some of his family members, while recognizing the privileges he has from being born in the country. In public, however, Pablo has been the target of xenophobic threats aimed at "illegals" and has witnessed social inequities firsthand. His mother Ángela shares with us:

> A lot of things happen on the streets. We sometimes see accidents or problems that happen, sometimes people that are on the streets and that has helped us a lot to see and say why, why is this so? We have been treated very badly on the street, without having done anything sometimes people offend us or shout at us, they do a lot of things to us but that has also helped us to become stronger and we talk a lot about the reason why it is like that, or why there is poor treatment of us and I always tell him: "You have to study, you have to study because it will be the best way to show what you are and that despite the way you are treated in any place, with your studies you will be able to defend yourself". So I say that to him and he also says the same thing to me: "You have to learn English! And nobody will be helping you and there will be a time when you will be alone and what you're going to do? Learn because you are in a country where it is needed and you have to learn"…That is what helps the two of us have hope, because we talk about what we see happening. We go outside to the park to talk, we sit hours and hours and that is what helps us, the communication. [Interview Excerpt, July 2015]

It is evident that Ángela and Pablo are engaged in on-going dialogue about social justice, survival, and the possibilities of education to provide a more secure life. They are reading the world (Freire, 1970)—situating specific experiences and struggles, whether their own or those of others, within broader social and political dynamics. In their day-to-day lives, they participate in a subaltern counterpublic that provides a corrective to deficit representations of their experiences and of their neighborhood. Communication and inquiry (e.g. "we talk about the reason why it is like that") are ways to make visible power dynamics. They are also forms of action that foster hope. Youth and families' counterpublics can become a profound curricular resource in educational contexts, both in- and out-of-school.

6. AN INQUIRY STANCE INTO DIALOGIC PEDAGOGY

A close examination of the data reveals that the participants indeed did not share their lives in what might be characterized as a merely confessional mode, and we understand the reservations to such an approach. It may too easily lead to evaluating people as "felons" or "good immigrants," a traumatized victim or a hero who, through talent and hard work, achieves the American Dream. Irrespective of how an immigrant is evaluated, a focus on personal stories abstracted from larger social and political dynamics may contribute to the myth of the autonomous agent who makes good or bad choices in a meritocratic society. This is the individualist ideology that circumscribes discourse in the dominant public sphere. Instead, Ángela, Pablo and the other women and children in our study participated in a discourse community that reflected collective intellectual and activist engagement around

systemic issues, thus challenging the characterization of immigrant communities as either criminals or the passive benefactors of others' hospitality.

How, given the realities of a dominant public sphere that scapegoats communities, can we foster dialogue in educational settings? An inquiry stance, which situates teaching and learning within larger sociopolitical contexts, has taught us that trust, intellectual respect, and political solidarity are preconditions for dialogic teaching, especially when working with minoritized communities. It has also helped us discern how community members are agents within counterpublic spheres, and how a dialogic pedagogy might mobilize their knowledge, commitments, and inquiries in the classroom.

6.1 Building Trust and Political Solidarity

Dialogic teaching, especially across difference, requires a foundation of trust. The families in the inquiry group and students such as Pablo needed to feel relatively safe to voice their insights and questions. An inquiry stance views teaching as social and political rather than merely neutral (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), and thus shifts these considerations to the forefront of the classroom. Dialogic teaching in both our examples was possible because we cultivated relationships as part of a long-term partnership with St. Frances Cabrini. Our curriculum developed over time with community members' input. In the tradition of practitioner research, this form of systematic improvisation allowed us to "incorporate their ever-evolving experiences into the class" (Campano, 2007). The projects also built on previous collaboration; for example, master's students in Gerald's courses had been part of an annual "PennPal" exchange with children in the Sunday school, and a number of these youth went on to be part of the CRP. Parish leaders were also vocal advocates for immigrant rights, and the research collaboration suggested our own solidarity with this cause. We were transparent about how our political stance was in part shaped by our own immigrant family backgrounds and by prior involvement with activist organizations in the counterpublic. Genuine dialogic teaching might not have been possible had trust and political solidarity not been built over time.

6.2 Listening to People's Experiences and Knowledge Claims

An important aspect of dialogic teaching is the reciprocity of listening to each other's ideas (Alexander, 2006, as cited in Boyd & Markarian, 2011). An inquiry stance helps complicate the notion of listening with regards to issues of power, because it entails interrogating our own identities vis-à-vis those with whom we are in dialogue. A person may be listening, but that does not imply that he/she is hearing accurately (Mohanty, 1997) or that there is an egalitarian relationship. What is heard in any interaction is invariably filtered through one's own interpretive lenses. Individuals from historically minoritized communities, like the youth and families in our partnership, may experience what Fricker (2007, p. 1) describes as testimonial injustice: "when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated sense of credibility to

the speaker's words" thereby undermining her/his "capacity as a knower." For example, it was evident from the mothers' discussions in the family literacy/ESOL class that many were activist parents who were advocating for their children's education, and that they had garnered astute understandings of educational inequities in the district. However, because they were Spanish-speaking (which as one mother noted "people get upset" about) and of Mexican descent, their concerns were often dismissed or unheard. An inquiry stance encourages researchers and practitioners to reflect on their own social locations and what these may reveal or obscure. This self-reflexivity can make them more attuned to the ways in which families' and youth's histories, experiences, and identities productively inform their capacities to make meaningful interpretations and claims.

6.3 Building Curriculum from Participants' Inquiries

Dialogic teaching involves building on learner's ideas and "chain[ing] them in coherent lines of thinking and inquiry" (Alexander, 2006, as cited in Boyd, 2011, p. 518). Because an inquiry stance asks critical questions about practice, such as who decides what gets done and whose interests are served by a classroom interaction, it may help educators become sensitized to topics that matter to families but remain invisible in the dominant public sphere. In both projects, our curricular invitations grew out of participants' discussions and interests. The Community Researchers Project began at the request of community leaders and was structured from the outset around youth investigating questions that mattered to them. This meant that their focus at times diverted from our own expectations. For example, instead of explicitly exploring immigration as we had initially assumed, youth talked about and researched medical issues because their own families struggled with access to adequate care (Campano, Ngo, & Player, 2015). In the family ESOL class, the issues raised during the Class News routine became a mechanism for co-constructing curriculum. For example, the mothers' *testimonios* of their difficulties accessing monolingual school contexts led to a series of bilingual explorations about communicating with educators. Families compared and contrasted schooling in Mexico and the United States using the language of their choosing, and based on this discussion we introduced relevant vocabulary in English that participants used to write and role-play conversations with their children's teachers and administrators. In both projects, our pedagogy linked participants' classroom dialogue with discussions of equity and access occurring within their counterpublics.

6.4 Navigating Tensions Dialogically

One of the paradoxes of taking an inquiry stance is that, while we adhered to an overall dialogic orientation, there were aspects of the class sessions that were ostensibly taught monologically. Boyd and Markarian (2011) caution against the oversimplification of dialogic teaching, noting that "the outward appearances of particular instances of talk structures in a classroom are not necessarily the best indica-

tors of the underlying dynamic of the learning of the classroom" (p. 517), so that, for example, open questions typically associated with dialogism may be in the service of a monologic stance. Our pedagogy in the family ESOL class at times involved direct instruction of specific language elements, with instances of "repeat after me" to hone pronunciation and teacher directed known-answer questions used to review specific vocabulary or verb conjugations. These features became part of the class because participants asked for their inclusion. We would learn through our research that families had a great deal of investment in the interactional patterns associated with school in Latin America. As participatory educators and researchers, we viewed these traditional arrangements—illustrative of the banking model of education (Freire, 1970)—with skepticism. However, we learned that the families, many of whom felt as if their own educational trajectories had been prematurely curtailed, wanted the opportunity to take up successful academic identities in the ways that were conventionally valued. They negotiated and traversed multiple publics in their lives. An inquiry stance enabled us to be less dogmatic and more sensitive of the situated nature of the families' desires for the class.

7. CONCLUSION: DIALOGUE AND EPISTEMIC HUMILITY

Freire (1998) identifies humility as a virtue of dialogue that "helps us understand this obvious truth: No one knows it all; no one ignorant of everything. We all know something; we are all ignorant of something" (p. 39). We would like to add to this insight by suggesting that epistemic humility also entails an acknowledgement that there are often multiple dialogues occurring around some of our most significant shared inquiries, including: Who counts as an American? What languages have value? Who deserves access to high quality schools and health care? Who, invoking Arendt (1976), has the "right to have rights" (p. 298)? And who can generate knowledge about the world and bring about change? Through the Class News and the Community Researchers Project, the mothers and youth we worked with were co-constructing meaning around these questions as part of their participation in a robust multilingual counterpublic sphere. One implication is that a precondition for dialogue might entail all members of a learning community—students, parents, researchers, and teachers alike—to actively cultivate membership in a plurality of counterpublics as a means of addressing power asymmetries and learning from each other.

This article hopes to contribute to this themed issue on international perspectives on dialogic theory and practice by examining the conditions within which dialogism is even possible, especially for multilingual immigrant families and youth. In classrooms governed by monologic instruction, where knowledge is sought to be the neutral transmission of pre-set objectives, students' complex realities will likely become homogenized through standardization and their own inquiries will have very little purchase on the curriculum (Campano, 2007; Caughlan & Juzwik, 2014). Even if students feel as if their multilingual transnational experiences are not adequately represented in school, they may decide that it is just "too complicated"

(Ghiso & Campano, 2013, p. 262) to speak back to dominant discourses and ideologies. Sometimes they sense, rightfully, that engaging in dialogue and sharing their stories could put them and their families risk. One implication of our research involves the need for schools to dialogically include the robust multilingual counterpublics of their students' home and neighborhood communities into the curriculum. This may initially be done through developing partnerships with local organizations and viewing parents and community leaders as partners who have critical knowledge about the potential role of education in a participatory democracy.

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