Escribiendo Juntos: Toward a Collaborative Model of Multiliterate Family Literacy in English Only and Anti-immigrant Contexts

Jessica Singer Early
Arizona State University

This article describes an after-school family literacy program as a model of multiliterate collaboration under and against English Only and anti-immigrant conditions. The model reveals how state politics surrounding language, ethnicity, and citizenship may interact with the activity systems of family literacy programs to redefine what counts as sanctioned language and literacy learning within school spaces. This article details the findings of a qualitative study and includes the goals and curriculum of the program, as well as the recruiting mechanisms, participants, participant feedback, and participant experiences. Findings from the study reveal the role of parental investment in language and literacy learning, language co-construction, and honoring of all languages, cultures, and experiences. This family literacy model contributes to literacy studies by offering possibilities for future school-sponsored, multiliterate family literacy research collaborations to draw from and extend the language and literacy practices and funds of knowledge of ELL students, parents, teachers, and literacy scholars working within English Only and anti-immigrant contexts.

Parents and their children sat side-by-side in a tight circle with journals in hand. Elianita, a second grader, sat in a chair at the front of the room and read the opening lines from her narrative describing her parents’ support for her schooling: “My parents help me with my homework whenever I need it. They help me be smart and study. They teach me to be special and to try my best with my school work.” Next, Brenna, also a second grader, took the chair and read her piece about her mother and stepfather’s support for her as a young writer: “My mom is nice by helping me spelling words I don’t know and my step dad helps me write. They both want me to get my words right.” Then, Guadalupe, Brenna’s mother, read from her narrative describing advice she had received from her friend, Jeanni, who she had met upon her arrival to the United States from Mexico. Guadalupe’s story described the ways Jeanni’s friendship and mentoring had empowered her to continue her education and to lay a foundation for her daughter’s success: “Jeanni me ayudó a fortalecer mi interior a creer que el futuro de mis hijas se hace con cada día, trabajando en equipo con José y buscando los recursos disponibles para lograrlo.” (Jeanni helped me strengthen my inner self to believe my daughter’s future is forged day by day, working as a team with José, and seeking the resources to achieve it.)
The opportunity to write and share this memory of support and friendship brought Guadalupe, and many of the family writers sitting around her, to tears. Mothers, fathers, and their second-grade children each read narratives written during the last weeks of a multiliterate after-school family literacy project for English language learners and their parents and siblings at an urban elementary school within a state embroiled in issues of race and racism.

This collaborative model of family literacy took place within an educational and political context of anti-immigrant legislation and sentiment, revealing how state politics surrounding language use, ethnicity, and citizenship may interact with the activity systems of after-school family literacy programs to redefine what counts as sanctioned language and literacy learning within a school space. This article details the goals and curriculum of the program, as well as the recruiting mechanisms, participants, participant feedback, and participant experiences examined by a qualitative study built into the program from its inception.

Theoretical Frame
This project employs a sociocultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), in which the specific cultural activities of language and literacy learning are viewed as products of social interaction and grounded within a larger cultural context (Bakhtin, 1986; Volosinov, 1973). A sociocultural orientation derives from a family of theorists working to understand “activity [as] situated in concrete interactions that are simultaneously improvised locally and mediated by prefabricated, historically provided tools and practices” (Prior, 2006, p. 55). This position runs counter to an autonomous view of literacy, which views education as a process of direct translation of skills devoid of context, political backdrop, language, and culture (Lee, 2003). From a sociocultural perspective, writing is always situated within a context, is tied to specific purposes, and changes over time with practice and guidance (Bazerman et al., 2017; Dyson, 2003; Wardle & Roozen, 2012; Winn, 2011). This framework considers the everyday worlds, interactions, home and school spaces, and relationships in which multilingual children and their parents engage as rich and valued sites of learning (Campano, 2007; Heath, 1983; Street, 1995). Such a lens allows for an examination of the varied language and literacy practices at play in forming and enacting a family literacy community, while also considering the social and political context (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003).

Multiliteracies and Funds of Knowledge
Within the larger umbrella of sociocultural theory, I draw from two conceptual frameworks: Cope and Kalantzis’s (2000) concept of multiliteracies, which grew out of the work of the New London Group (2000) and Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez’s (1992) concept of funds of knowledge. The concept of multiliteracy considers the ways diverse “modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources, constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 5). This perspective acknowledges the multiplicity of practices, languages, cultures, and values encountered and exchanged
within a literacy community (McLean, Boling, & Rowsell, 2009) and works to
counter a dominant perception of the “formalized, monolingual, mono-cultural,
and rule-governed forms of language” (New London Group, 2000, p. 9) privileged
in the school, district, and state where this study took place. A multiliteracy ap-
proach works to broaden the lens and scope of literacy studies to include, utilize,
and extend the diversity of language, culture, lived experience, and expertise of all
participants within a literacy community (Alvermann, 2004; Skerrett & Bomer,
2013). It also means finding ways of enacting multiliterate learning spaces, even
when social or cultural contexts or formal school practices do not support, or
actively suppress, this work (McLean, Boling, & Rowsell, 2009; Street, 2003).

Along with the concept of multiliteracies, I employ and extend Moll, Amanti,
Neff, and Gonzalez’s (1992) concept of funds of knowledge to examine the unique
language, cultural, and social expertise participants bring to and practice within
a family literacy community (Gutiérrez, 2008). Funds of knowledge is a concept
based on the premise that “people are competent, they have knowledge, and their
life experiences have given them that knowledge” (González et al., 2005, p. ix-x). I
view this as a fluid concept, in which individuals’ language and literacy practices
continually shift and expand through participation in and engagement with literacy
communities (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Rather than viewing family literacy programs
as an opportunity to teach parents and children how to work with schools to bet-
ter “do school,” I am interested in the way family literacy programs may work to
recognize, intersect with, and draw and learn from the funds of knowledge of all
involved in creating and enacting this work. This project works to promote the
intermingling of the literacy funds of knowledge of all participants within a family
literacy community as a means of working toward more equitable and inclusive
language and literacy learning for English language learners and their families
within an inequitable and exclusionary educational context.

Moving toward a Collaborative and Inclusive Model of Family Literacy

Over the past thirty years, research in family literacy has complicated the deficit
perspective of immigrant students and families by detailing the rich cultural prac-
tices, parenting styles, and funds of knowledge (Shapiro, 2014; Moll et al., 1992)
found in children’s families, home lives, and communities (Farr, 2004; Heath, 1983;
Valdés, 1996). Even with these advancements in literacy research, a dominant and
deficit view of Latino parents as perceiving school as a separate realm from family
and the workplace, and not investing in their children’s academic lives, persists
(Clark & Flores, 2007; Valencia, 1997). Moreover, existing models and programs
of school and community-based family literacy often position schools and teach-
ers as the main sources or sponsors of formal language and literacy knowledge
(Brandt, 2001) and position ethnically and linguistically diverse families and their
children, even with rich and valuable cultural and linguistic knowledge (Heath,

For example, the FLAME program (Rodríguez-Brown, 2004) is a well-es-
tablished family literacy model that emerged from a Chicago-based community
program housed in schools. The program provided literacy training for immigrant
parents of elementary students in their native languages and educated parents “to become good literacy models and to support their children’s literacy development in the language the parents knew best” (Rodríguez-Brown, 2004, p. 215). While this model enhances parent self-efficacy, builds parent literacy skills, improves the relationship between parent and child, and models strategies for parents to support their children’s literacy, it positions schools and teachers as experts and participating families as the consumers of information. The FLAME model and other more recent models of family literacy (Paratore, 2005) do not always promote a highly collaborative exchange of language and literacy funds of knowledge between and among families, students, and teachers. Prior models of family literacy have often positioned teachers as instructors or coaches transferring skills and strategies to parents to then give to their children, rather than positioning parents as collaborators and coparticipants in the family literacy community alongside their children and the teacher.

In this article, I offer a collaborative, multiliterate family literacy model to make visible, draw from, and extend the language and literacy funds of knowledge of all participants. This model demonstrates ways literacy scholars, teachers, students, and families may collaborate to create school-based language and literacy spaces for ethnically and linguistically diverse families and students living and working in English Only and anti-immigrant instructional contexts where they are too often denied access to learning and literacy in their native languages. It also reveals the ways family literacy programs, language and literacy research, and teaching may be strengthened to include the funds of knowledge of ethnically and linguistically diverse students and families alongside the literacy expertise of teachers and researchers.

In presenting this model, I ask a series of interrelated questions that the family literacy model responds to: (1) What does it mean to co-construct a multiliterate family literacy community? (2) How is a multiliterate family literacy community designed and enacted within a school space located in an English Only, anti-immigrant context? (3) How does a multiliterate family literacy program draw from and build upon participants’ unique funds of knowledge? (4) Finally, in what ways may this project serve as a model for future school-based family literacy collaborations to provide a counter to English Only instructional laws and sheltered language programs?

Methods

Szwed (2001) argues that if researchers are to uncover the robust nature of literacies, they must document the “five elements of literacy, which include text, context, function, participants, and motivation” (p. 423). Using qualitative methods, I worked to uncover each of these five elements to gain an in-depth understanding of the structures and practices enacted within an after-school family literacy project. Data were collected using participant observation, demographic questionnaires, a home literacy practices survey, opening and closing questionnaires, and a collection of all writing samples from the teacher and study participants over a period of 3 months.
Setting
The setting for this study is a comprehensive public charter elementary school located in a major urban center in the southwestern United States. At the time of the study, the school’s student body comprised 739 students in preschool through eighth grade. The student population was 86% Hispanic, 5% White, 4% Native American, and 2% African American; 89% of the student body qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. The school had consistently not met its Adequate Yearly Progress goals and was classified as “underperforming.” It was also in a period of transition, with a new administrator and a teaching staff made up of predominantly early-career teachers. The district, in partnership with two outside educational consulting firms, was undergoing a turnaround effort to improve achievement on state tests, pull schools out of “underperforming” or “failing” status, and reclassify students designated as ELLs as English proficient.

In response to a state law, which had taken effect two years prior to the study, schools throughout the state had created sheltered English Language Development (ELD) classrooms. The law called for the formation of an ELL task force to create a research-based and prescriptive classroom model of instruction for ELLs that would lead to English proficiency within one year. Under the direction of this task force, the state mandated language ability grouping and a 4-hour Structured English Immersion (SEI) model for ELL elementary students (Lillie, Fredonia, Arias, & Wiley, 2012). Since state law mandated English Only instruction, students at the school who spoke Spanish or any other language at home had little or no access to instruction in their native languages.

Not only did this study take place in the context of the state’s English Only language policy and sheltered language courses for language learners, but it also took place at a time when the state stood at the epicenter of national immigration politics as a result of the governor’s anti–illegal immigration measure granting police the permission to stop, question, detain, or arrest based on reasonable suspicion of illegal immigrant status. During this time, the highly contested legislation sparked a national debate about race, racism, citizenship, immigration, and civil rights. Undocumented immigrants living in the urban area became the target of immigration sweeps by federal and county enforcement officers, which resulted in regular police surveillance of predominantly Hispanic communities, including the neighborhoods surrounding the school. Leading these sweeps was the infamous county sheriff known for his highly politicized and visible stance against undocumented immigrants. Because of this political situation, the school, along with schools throughout the state, experienced high numbers of absences and withdrawals as immigrant parents feared imprisonment or deportation for themselves or their children.

Even within this highly charged educational context, Ms. Ruiz, the classroom teacher featured in this study, received administrative permission to conduct the family literacy project in her classroom after school hours. She presented the idea for the project as a space where the families of her ELL students could feel supported and write together. Though it was approved, the family literacy project remained
under the radar in terms of administrative involvement or support. There was no school or district support for the project in terms of funding, supplies, or release time. The principal and vice principal never visited the project, never greeted or welcomed parents or me as we entered the school to attend the project meetings, and did not allow the teacher to miss faculty meetings or professional trainings for project meetings.

Language Use
The after-school family literacy community became a space where use of multiple languages was practiced and encouraged by all participants. All speaking, writing, online, and analog communication, instruction, and curricular resources were presented first in Spanish and then in English. Prior to this project, teachers, students, and parents had not engaged in bilingual instruction or learning at school due to legal restrictions on bilingual practices in schools in the state. Because the family literacy project took place after school hours, the English Only instructional laws prohibiting use of Spanish instruction during the school day did not bind us.

I use the term English language learner to describe the second-grade students participating in this study because it accurately depicts how the students were all actively engaged in learning English as a second language within and beyond the realm of school and within this project. This is also a term used to classify the students within the school context. I do not view the term as a deficit classification. Students learning English as a second language came to this study with rich linguistic and cultural expertise that uniquely positioned them to take part in a multiliterate community, drawing from their unique languages, cultures, and perspectives (Ball, 2006; Paris & Winn, 2013; Yosso, 2005).

Participants
The following section describes the participants of this study, including parents, family members, students, teacher, and researcher.

Parents and Family Members
Families were recruited during parent-teacher conferences at the beginning of the spring semester (January). In addition, the classroom teacher sent home bilingual invitations, in both English and Spanish, with her second-grade students during the first weeks of the semester. The inclusion criteria required that participating adults must be: (1) either parents or guardians of a student from Ms. Ruiz’s sheltered ELL second-grade class; (2) Spanish-speaking (as either a first or second language); and (3) available to accompany their child(ren) during after-school hours for all family literacy project meetings.

The teacher sent invitations home to twenty-two students in her sheltered ELL class. Sixteen parents responded with interest, thirteen attended the first night, and eleven completed the study (nine mothers and two fathers). Seven of the participating parents self-identified as Hispanic, four as Mexican American, and one as Latina. Eight of the parents were born and raised in Mexico and immigrated to the United States. Four of the parents were born and raised in the
United States in the same Southwestern city where they were raising their children. The first language of all but one of the participating parents was Spanish. Two of the parents self-reported speaking both Spanish and English fluently, five parents self-reported speaking English as a second language conversationally, and two parents self-reported feeling unproficient in English as a second language; two parents did not report. The open invitational format made collecting data on the extended family members participating in the project a challenge. Participation varied depending on the week. For example, on one week four siblings attended, and on another week 12 attended. Sibling ages ranged from 12 weeks to 12 years. Because of unpredictable attendance and a wide range of ages among the siblings, data were collected only on the adult (parent or guardian) and student participants who met the participation criteria.

Students
Inclusion criteria required that each student participating in this study must: (1) be classified by the school as an English language learner; (2) currently be enrolled in Ms. Ruiz’s sheltered second-grade ELD class for ELLs; (3) speak Spanish as a first language; and (4) have received parental permission to attend the family literacy meetings with a parent or guardian. Based on these criteria, nine girls and one boy participated. Students were all either 7 or 8 years old. Nine of the students had been born and raised in the same city where they were attending school; one of the students was born in a neighboring state and had moved to the city two years prior. Two students had basic knowledge of reading and writing in Spanish stemming from their family/home and religious practices. All of the students had parents or family members who spoke Spanish at home, and all students were conversational, if not fluent, in Spanish as their first language.

None of the parents or students had participated in a family literacy project prior to this project. Table 1 displays language use, occupation, education level, and children’s names for all participating parents.

Teacher
Ms. Ruiz served as the lead teacher and main point of contact for students and parents. She was a second-generation Mexican American born and raised in the same city where she taught. Her first language was English, and she was biliterate and bilingual in Spanish and English. At the time of the study, she had taught five years and was working toward a master’s degree in education at the local university. I met Ms. Ruiz the year prior to the study, when she participated in the Summer Institute of the local National Writing Project site, which I direct at the local university. After participating in the Summer Institute, Ms. Ruiz asked if I could collaborate with her to design and implement an after-school family literacy project for her elementary students. She envisioned the project as an extension of her classroom space to include parents, siblings, extended family members, and me. Her conception of the after-school family writing project built upon the work of other National Writing Project sites, such as the Sabal Palms Writing Project in Texas and the Red Clay Writing Project at the University of Georgia (Allen, 2007).
Table 1. Family Writing Project Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Name</th>
<th>First Language</th>
<th>Second Language</th>
<th>Second Language Proficiency</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Highest Level of Education</th>
<th>Second-Grade ELL Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Conversational</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>Elianita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Custom roofing</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>Elianita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caro</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>Viviana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernesto</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Fluent</td>
<td>Van leasing</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Viviana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Not proficient</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>Jane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Conversational</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>High school with some college classes</td>
<td>Juli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliza</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Fluent</td>
<td>Food service at the school</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Cintia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guadalupe</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>Brenna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td>Electrician</td>
<td>Community college</td>
<td>Brenna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Not proficient</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Rocio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lani</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>Marco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>Eliza</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Researcher

I served as a researcher and coteacher within this project. I am a White, middle-class woman, a professor of English education and director of the local National Writing Project site at a large public university. I taught high school English language arts prior to earning my doctorate and becoming a professor. My first language is English, and I am conversational in Spanish. Ms. Ruiz invited me to colead and study the family writing project from its beginning. Although I entered the school community as an outsider in terms of my race, social class, education, and professional role, I was committed to teaching and researching this project as a participant-observer (Spradley, 2016) and I worked to take on an emic perspective through my dual role as a coteacher and researcher (Erickson, 1985). Along with
coteaching, I cocreated all curriculum with Ms. Ruiz, and purchased supplies and snacks for the project. I helped set up and clean up the classroom each week. I also sent weekly reflections, suggestions, and reminders to Ms. Ruiz, checked in with her regarding curriculum and supplies, and participated in all of the workshop activities when I was not teaching. Prior to the project launch, I received parental and student consents to conduct the study and collect data.

Data Collection

The study incorporates data from the following sources:

Demographic Questionnaire

This instrument included questions about age, occupation, ethnicity, schooling, language use, and educational background (responses are recorded in Table 1).

Home Literacy Practices Survey

This survey drew from similar survey instruments utilized in prior family literacy studies focusing on frequency of literacy-based activity and access to literacy materials and/or tools (Jordan, Snow, & Porche, 2000). I included Van Steensel’s (2006), Purcell-Gates’s (1996), and Teale and Sulzby’s (1986) questions on the occurrence of six separate types of literacy sources and one literacy activity books, magazines, newspapers, video games, computer, book CDs or digital recordings of books, and visits to the library. Five questions (one each) addressed the frequency of writing practices at home, oral storytelling without the use of books (cf. Palmer, Harshbarger, & Koch, 2001), library visits (cf. Jordan et al., 2000), and viewing of literacy-focused television programs such as Sesame Street (Jordan et al., 2000). The survey also included a question about the language(s) the parents and children used to read and write at home.

Opening and Closing Questionnaires

The opening questionnaire included three questions for participating parents:

1. Describe what you hope to learn or get out of the family literacy project.
2. Describe if and how you give feedback to your child about his or her writing.
3. Share what you hope to take away from this after-school literacy project to use in the future.

The closing questionnaire included four questions for participating parents:

1. Reflect on your experience of participating in the family literacy project.
2. Describe what you liked about the experience.
3. Describe what you found helpful about giving and receiving feedback about writing with your child.
4. Describe what you will take away from this after-school literacy project and use in the future.
Both the opening and closing questionnaires included a prompt for parents to submit their questions and comments. Although there were certain limitations to the questionnaire and survey instruments in gauging overall parental investment in literacy within the home, these instruments served as a mechanism for understanding parents’ self-reported literacy practices, writing interests, goals, and questions related to the project.

The political backdrop of this study influenced my methodological approach. For example, I had originally hoped to collect pre- and post-interview data to gain insight into participating parents’ home-based literacy practices and perspectives of the project. However, asking parents about their histories and backgrounds, when many were feeling threatened by racist laws, felt invasive. The distribution of a questionnaire and survey instruments served as a safer and less intrusive way to gather information from parents. I worked to make methodological choices that considered the broader social and political context of the study and accounted for the positionality and vulnerability of participants (Dyson, 2003; Prior, 2006).

**Written Texts**

Three types of written texts were included: (1) texts written and produced for the family literacy curriculum (see Table 2 for writing produced in the workshop); (2) written research memos and documents distributed to participants by the teaching team, and daily notes about my observations in memo form; and (3) email communication between Ms. Ruiz and me.

**Instructional Procedures**

The family literacy meetings took place after school in Ms. Ruiz’s classroom from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday afternoons for 10 weeks during the spring semester. Before the project began, Ms. Ruiz and I met to co-construct the calendar and curriculum for the 10-week project. Ms. Ruiz and I created curriculum for families to tell stories based on their lived experience and expertise. We wanted participants to think about the ways in which they were valued and valuable within their communities and to think about the people they had known who had inspired positive and significant social change in their lives (Early, 2006; Singer & Shagoury, 2006). Each session was designed as a writing workshop consisting of mini-lessons with model texts, writing strategies, writing time, author sharing and written reflections (Kittle, 2008).

Each session involved 11 components: (1) greetings and snack, (2) writing warm-up, (3) a writing skill or strategy lesson, (4) practice using the new writing skill or strategy, (5) practice writing in parent/child partnerships or in small table-groups, (6) a teacher-led invitation to write, (7) writing time, (8) practice writing in parent/child partnerships or in small table-groups, (9) closing writer’s-circle sharing from the day’s writing, (10) closing reflection writing, and (11) closing announcements and goodbyes (see Table 3 for the workshop schedule and writing skill lessons). Ms. Ruiz and I cotaught throughout the project and rotated teaching mini-lessons, reading model texts, and responding to students and parents as they shared writing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop Day of Production</th>
<th>Writing Projects</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Home literacy practices survey</td>
<td>Survey</td>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Neighborhood map</td>
<td>Map and narrative</td>
<td>Parents, students, teacher, and researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sticky note #1</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Famous poems</td>
<td>Poem</td>
<td>Parents, students, and teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Draw picture and write explanation of poem</td>
<td>Drawing and reflection</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brainstorm list of memories</td>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Childhood stories: Writing an introduction</td>
<td>Narrative introductions</td>
<td>Parents, students, and teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sticky note #2</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Writing with imagery</td>
<td>Imaginative and descriptive free-writing</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Writing with detail</td>
<td>Descriptive free-writing</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Writing care packages: Children's book and reflection questions</td>
<td>Reflecting on reading</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Brainstorm positive change makers</td>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Writing care packages: Children's book and annotation</td>
<td>Annotating reading</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Narrative introduction</td>
<td>Narrative introduction</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Dialogue journal</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sticky note #4</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rough draft of narrative</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Receiving a piece</td>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Illustration of narrative</td>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Revision of narrative</td>
<td>Revision</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sticky note #5</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Final narrative and illustration</td>
<td>Narrative and illustration</td>
<td>Parents and students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Closing questionnaire</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Family Writing Project Schedule and Skill Lessons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Workshop Week</th>
<th>Curriculum Focus</th>
<th>Writing Skill Lesson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introductions, neighborhood maps</td>
<td>Prewriting, drawing, sharing writing aloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Famous poems</td>
<td>Brainstorming, sharing with partners and whole group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Family stories, introductions</td>
<td>Brainstorming, writing introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Family stories, imagery and detail</td>
<td>Writing with imagery and detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Reading stories of positive change makers</td>
<td>Responding to text, brainstorming narrative topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reading stories of positive change makers</td>
<td>Using dialogue to tell a story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No workshop (parent/teacher conferences)</td>
<td>Writing care packages</td>
<td>Annotating and responding to text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No workshop (spring break)</td>
<td>Writing care packages</td>
<td>Annotating and responding to text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Writing narratives of positive change makers (brainstorming, first draft of stories of justice)</td>
<td>Writing introductions, feedback with dialogue journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Writing narratives of positive change makers (receiving the piece, revising and editing, publishing)</td>
<td>Receiving a piece of writing, writing conclusions, revising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Writing narratives of positive change makers (editing, publishing)</td>
<td>Revising and polishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Final authors’ celebration</td>
<td>Sharing/celebrating writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the final meeting, we held a celebratory reading for the participating families to share the narratives they had revised, polished, and illustrated. Ms. Ruiz published each writer’s story and illustration in a bound spiral notebook. She invited participants to bring extended family members, friends, and neighbors to the culminating celebration, which showcased the hard work and commitment of the community of writers. All participants received certificates of completion and a final portfolio folder containing copies of writing and art produced in the workshop (see Early, 2006; Early & Flores, 2015 for further description of curriculum).

Data Analysis
Data analysis began through the process of data collection with the decisions I made as a participant-observer (Spradley, 2016) and continued throughout my collection of writing samples and surveys, as well as in my written observations and reflections. To understand and interpret the stories, experiences, and perspectives revealed in the data and to align with my sociocultural approach (Prior, 2006), I...
applied a “multidimensional and situated approach” to understanding the textual data (Kamberelis & de la Luna, 2004, p. 239). Categorization of the data was a fluid process. I merged or shifted categories as needed as the analysis advanced (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Rather than analyzing the writing for “correctness” or completion or as isolated text, I deliberately took steps to examine written text production as a socially embedded, shared, and evolving practice within a community. To do this, first, I organized the data by individual and read each participant’s body of writing. Next, I organized the written texts into groups by family and read and analyzed them as a familial unit. Finally, I reorganized the written texts by chronological writing events that occurred in the community, and then analyzed these as writing events. Finally, I organized and collapsed codes generated through the multistep analysis into more general themes. Below, I detail these stages.

In the initial stage of analysis, I separated, gathered, and copied textual data (e.g., writing and drawings) produced by individual writers and then organized the data chronologically in individual folders based on date of production. I read and highlighted written data, noting recurring ideas, topic threads, language use, or questions emerging from individuals’ written texts. This allowed me to see how individual language and literacy practices evolved over the course of the project. For example, I noted how some students or parents wrote primarily about one topic or main idea throughout the whole project (e.g., teacher, mother, or sense of belonging), and I also noted language choices and shifts within the writing.

In the second stage of analysis, I worked to examine participants’ writing in connection to and within the context of their families. Therefore, I reorganized the written data to cluster it by family instead of by individual writer. For example, I selected a student, first read all of her collected writing samples, and then read all of the writing samples from her parent(s) and family members, noting commonalities and differences (e.g., themes, language use, topics, writing decisions or choices). Through this process of reorganizing, rereading, and recoding the written data as a collection of texts, I began to understand more completely how participants worked on, interacted with, and created writing within the family literacy community.

In the third stage of analysis, I reorganized the data based on types of text produced and in dated order of production. Organizing data into “writing events” allowed for an examination of texts as collective events and not as solo or decontextualized acts. In this read-through, I made a list of overall codes to see what began to emerge across all writing tasks within the community of writers as a whole instead of as individual or family clusters (see Table 2 for writing categories and codes; also see Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

In the final stage of analysis, I collapsed codes into more general themes, which resulted in a set of three: (1) parental investment in literacy, (2) co-constructed and negotiated language use, and (3) honoring participants’ languages, cultures, and stories. I then broke the three themes into more specific subcategories. For example, I organized parental investment in literacy into: reading, writing, literacy
tools, and literacy spaces (e.g., library, home computer space). I determined which subcategories frequently appeared across participants based on theme. Some of the writing samples or written responses overlapped and did not fit neatly into one category or another, so I chose to code these for more than one theme (e.g., home computer could be a space or a literacy tool). This allowed me to interpret data in fresh ways and reframe categories to be inclusive and to take into consideration different perspectives and viewpoints. I worked to capture writing samples and field and research notes with the intention of allowing the voices and writing of the participants to shape the portrait of the project. All textual samples are provided in the language in which they were written. When text was originally written in Spanish, I either translated the text into English or summarized the text in the introductory sentence.

Findings

Three predominant themes emerged through data analysis in the co-construction and enactment of the multiliterate family literacy project within an English Only and anti-immigrant context. First, findings from this study reveal the ways Latino parents are deeply invested in, engaged with, and supportive of their ELL children’s school- and home-based language and literacy practices. These findings directly counter deficit notions of Latino and immigrant parent investment in school and home-based literacy. Second, the data reveal how it is possible and essential to create collaborative, school-sponsored, and school-based multiliterate family literacy communities within English Only and anti-immigrant contexts where decisions regarding language use are co-constructed between and among participants instead of being dictated by external factors. Finally, this study reveals how a family literacy community became a space where the ordinary acts of honoring and privileging participants’ languages, cultures, lived experiences, stories, and literacy knowledge become extraordinary within a school and state context grappling with and embroiled in issues of language use, race, and racism.

Literacy Support in the Home

A home literacy practices questionnaire and opening survey were distributed to all participating parents at the first meeting to gain a sense of what families brought to the project in terms of home literacy practices, investment in their children’s literacy growth with specific attention to writing, and reasons for participation. The questions all sought to gather information regarding literacy funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) within family home lives and to support a view of families as influential sponsors of literacy for their children (Brandt, 2001).

Reading and Writing

With regard to reading practices, parents reported that their children read 30 minutes to 6 hours per week. One mother reported that her daughter read every day: “Ella lee diariamete.” The number of books parents reported in the home ranged from “a few” to “a lot.” Parents also reported visiting their local public library once
a month and spending an average of 3–6 hours per week looking at or reading books with their children at the library. Only one parent reported that her child never visited the library. Two parents reported that their children listened to tapes, CDs, or the Internet very often.

Parents were also engaged in writing practices with their children at home. They reported that their children spent approximately 3–6 hours writing at home, with this time linked directly to school and homework activities. Parents and other family members wrote with their children one to four times per week, and parents occasionally wrote in front of their children to pay bills, make grocery lists, do work, or make plans. Only one parent reported never writing with her child. One mother helped her daughter with writing “siempre (always),” four reported helping their children with writing “a veces (occasionally),” and two reported helping “seldom.” Another mother shared her evening routine, which included motivating her son to get homework and writing done before play: “Me gusta motivarlos aque estudien y despues jugar.” Six of the parents reported regularly sharing oral stories as a family. All parents had computers or digital devices such as iPhones, iPads, or Kindles in their homes and allowed their children to use these devices as needed or wanted for homework, information, games, and communication.

The opening questionnaire revealed how all but one of the parents supported their children’s school writing at home by reading it over and talking about it in Spanish. Parents listened and responded whenever their children shared writing. One mother wrote, “I give feedback [on their writing] with my words and not through writing” and another mother wrote, “My husband is in charge of homework and his feedback is always verbal and always in Spanish.” Parents reported talking about their children’s writing in different ways. Some offered positive support: “Me gusta leer en voz alta y decirle lo bien que escribe” (I like to read it aloud and tell her how well she writes). Other parents provided suggestions or responses based on correctness and rules in writing, such as reviewing grammar or spelling. One mother wrote, “Hago proporcionar información, según sea necesario. A veces escribo las frases que está tratando de escribir y repasar las palabras y luego dividirlas en sílabas y sonidos.” (I do provide feedback as needed. I sometimes write out the phrases he is trying to write and go over the words and then break them down into syllables and sounds.)

Parents also exhibited an understanding of the connection between writing and reading as literacy practices. For example, one mother wrote, “Quiero aprender nuevas estrategias para ayudar a mi hija de codificación y decodificación” (I want to learn new strategies to help my daughter with encoding and decoding). Other parents were unclear about what their children were learning at school and saw the family writing project as a window in: “I want to see how and what my daughter is learning at school and then mimic this at home when we do homework, or on the weekends when we have free time. I can’t help her as effectively if I don’t know what she is working on.” The family literacy project served as a point of access into their children’s schooling that they had not had before.
Parent Goals
In the opening survey, parents articulated clear goals for attending the family writing project. Five parents hoped their children would acquire specific writing or literacy skills—for example: “Quiero aprender estrategias para ayudar a mi hijo llegar sus ideas sobre el papel” (I want to learn strategies to help my son get his ideas on paper); “I hope to develop skills to further help my child improve his writing skills and learn how to revise”; “Espero que mi hijo estará más consciente sobre el proceso de escritura” (I hope my child will become more conscious about the writing process); and “I want to help my son learn to describe what is going on in pictures, write a full story and feel more confident talking in front of others.” Three parents hoped to gain quality time with their children: “Espero poder compartir un momento especial de uno-a-un con mi hijo” (I hope to share some special one-on-one time with my child). Other parents hoped the writing project would improve writing efficacy: “I want my daughter to enjoy writing more and feel more confident as a writer.”

Although parents’ reasons for participation varied, all hoped to expand their existing understanding and practices of support for their children as writers at home. The participating parents were deeply engaged in supporting their children’s literacy prior to attending the family writing project, and they brought this investment, experience, expertise, and interest to the literacy community. They also came to the project with goals of their own for their children as writers, students, young people, and children. The survey allowed for these goals to be made visible to the teacher and me so we could think about, acknowledge, and try to meet them in our work as a community. This opportunity to articulate goals also gave parents a chance to put into words their reasons for committing to the project and made clear a kind of visible social contract for participation in this new community.

Co-constructed and Negotiated Language Use
Language use was a continually negotiated and co-constructed mechanism found within this project. Creating a multiliterate learning space meant continually trying on and practicing language. The teacher, parents, students, and I collaborated to communicate as readers, writers, and learners in Spanish and English. The multiliterate space was initiated at the start of the project, and members of the community then took up the use of language in their own ways and at their own pace. From the opening minutes of the first workshop, Ms. Ruiz spoke in Spanish first and then translated in English. She never explained, justified, or presented this language choice. Instead, she spoke in Spanish, translated in English, and asked for help if she was stuck on a word or translation.

For the first time, many students attempted to write or speak in Spanish. While all students spoke Spanish in their homes, they had never had the opportunity to speak or write in Spanish at school because of the state’s English Only instructional law. In Week 2, I captured one student negotiating his decision regarding language use in my field notes: “Marco asked me how he should share his writing with his mom. ‘What if my mom is writing in Spanish and I am writing in English?’ He
followed by saying, ‘I don’t know Spanish.’” While Marco understood his mom when she spoke Spanish only, he said he had only ever communicated with her in English at home. After this exchange, I invited Marco to share his writing with his mom in any language he preferred and emphasized how reading his work aloud to another person and sharing a conversation about his writing was the goal of the partner share. Marco read his work to his mom in English and then talked to her about the piece in English and Spanish. During the third week of the project, Marco shared his first attempt to write in Spanish:

Cuando hue me cumple años you pose me cara en el pastel y tambien me ermano Pero me ermana no porke no hue so cumple años. So yo me la pase vien agosto con me familia y tube muchos regalos recuerdo que me ermana yorava mucho. (When it was my birthday I put my face in the cake and so did my brother but my sister did not because it was not her birthday. So I had a good time with my family in August and had many presents and I remember my sister cried a lot.)

I asked Marco why he made this change as a writer and he said, “Because my mom doesn’t know English and I want to learn to write and speak in Spanish better.” Marco’s decision to use Spanish with his mom was his choice. Rather than having an institution, a teacher, or a parent tell him what language to use, the family literacy project gave him the space and the community to negotiate his own language use and learning. Toward the end of the project, he told Ms. Ruiz he wanted to “write and share my stories in Spanish so my family can laugh and cry along with me.” Marco’s writing and language use in connection to the neighborhood mapping activities revealed something quite ordinary, a student writing from his whole self and using the languages and experiences he chose. However, this work becomes extraordinary within a context of race and racism where people are restricted from using their native languages or discouraged from voicing and sharing their lived experiences.

Other students translated their parents’ written words for their peers in the workshop. As the workshop progressed, many students switched back and forth between speaking and writing in Spanish and English and became more accustomed to switching between and drawing from both languages within our community. In Week 6, I observed Eliza and her daughter, Cintia, giving one another feedback during a writing conference. I asked about their language choices and recorded the following exchange with Eliza: She told me, “I wrote in Spanish today for the first time.” I asked her why and she said, “To be completely honest, I don’t know.” She explained that she was fluent in both languages and Cintia was as well. Cintia said, “I don’t know why I wrote in Spanish. It just felt right. Maybe it’s because I was writing about a memory.” Eliza explained that they only spoke Spanish in the home but Cintia had been refusing to speak Spanish lately: “I’m worried she is going to lose her Spanish if she doesn’t keep it up.” Eliza’s choice to write in Spanish for the first time within the family literacy community revealed how language and memory can come alive and flourish when given opportunity, support, and permission. Cintia’s refusal to speak Spanish at home was expressed by her mother
as a kind of betrayal or letting go. However, within the context of the family literacy community, where language use and lived experience were permissible and welcomed, Cintia chose to write in Spanish for the first time.

The families participating in the project were far more savvy and sophisticated in switching between, drawing from, and listening to two languages than Ms. Ruiz and I. Parents and students often spontaneously jumped in to help Ms. Ruiz and me find words in Spanish and translated for us when we struggled. Speaking in Spanish and English placed Ms. Ruiz and me out of our normal teaching roles and into the role of language learners. This was unfamiliar terrain for all involved within a school-based setting. I shared my vulnerability by telling the families I felt nervous speaking and making mistakes in Spanish. One of the moms, Eliza, replied, “Don’t worry, now you know how we feel! I can help you.” As families and children witnessed us stumbling and succeeding with Spanish, they found ways to help translate, to answer questions, or to offer encouragement. Ms. Ruiz and I had to decenter our traditional roles as “experts” and allow for every participant in the room to take on a role as a language learner, teacher, and writer. This act of decentering allowed for a collaborative space with a new and different way of interacting and using language for parents and children.

The co-constructed use of language directly countered the English Only instructional practices of the students’ school context and allowed for all participants, regardless of language background or ability, to act as language learners and experts at the same time. Parents had a choice in how and when they used their native or second languages. This kind of ownership and autonomy with language provided a sense of authority and vulnerability not normally available to ELL students in English Only instruction states or to ethnically and linguistically diverse parents when engaging with schools.

Honoring Language, Culture, and Story
A third mechanism at play within the family literacy community was the importance of honoring language, culture, and story. The act of telling, illustrating, writing, and sharing stories shaped and defined this literacy community each week. Storytelling allowed for the intermingling and sharing of funds of knowledge, lived experience, and language and culture between and across all participants. The following vignette illustrates one example of how the space became a place where honoring stories, writing, and lived experience mattered and worked to shape and build the community.

Grabbing a marker, Ms. Ruiz sketched a house on a white piece of paper resting on an easel in the front of the room. In the first few minutes of the first family writing project meeting, she announced in Spanish and then in English:

Sometimes when I want to write a story, I choose a particular place and begin drawing to help me remember the details of the stories that happened there. I’m going to draw a map of the neighborhood where I grew up until I was 8 years old. In my map, I’m going to think about and sketch special places from my neighborhood and points of special interest. I want to be sure to add vivid details. I am also going to think about the people from my neighborhood, too.
Ms. Ruiz continued sketching and talking aloud about the buildings, houses, parks, streets, and people located on her map as part of her memories of this place. Her voice started to quiver as she remembered the connection she shared with her Nana. Next, she modeled her own process by writing a memory using chart paper in front of the classroom: “Ever since I can remember, I have been afraid of La Llorona.” [La Llorona, Spanish for weeping woman, is a famous Hispanic legend.] “The howling of the wind got louder, rain was coming down in buckets. ‘She’s coming for you!’ My Nana warned. ‘No Nana! No Nana! We promise we’ll be good.’

After Ms. Ruiz shared her neighborhood map and written memory, she invited parents and students to practice the prewriting strategy and to begin writing.

Think about where you live or where you have lived in the past, and the people and places in your neighborhood. It could be where you live now, or where you lived before, or a neighborhood where you spend a lot of time, like your Nana and Tata’s neighborhood. Sketch the special places and special points of interest of this neighborhood.

The second graders and their families eagerly opened the boxes of crayons and began sketching their own neighborhood maps. Ms. Ruiz then explained, “Allow for the drawing to tell the story of a special memory from your neighborhood.”

In this opening writing invitation, Ms. Ruiz revealed herself as a writer, a storyteller, and a person connected to family and place beyond her role as a teacher in a classroom. Through her own storytelling and modeling of writing, she revealed vulnerability as a writer, teacher, and person (young child feeling scared of the wind). She shared a connection to her own family and cultural stories through a reference to La Llorona. She spoke in two languages and wrote her words and images out on the page to demystify her thinking and imagining about the story. By doing so, she created space for students and their families to do the same. She also stepped outside of her traditional role as “expert” or instructor and became a storyteller, a writer, a Spanish and English speaker, and a young woman with childhood stories and fears. Ms. Ruiz showed her vulnerability and, by doing so, allowed others within the community to do the same.

Olivia, Elianita’s mom, drew a map of a pueblo in Mexico where she was raised and attended elementary school, and the nearby rancho that held memories and
stories from her childhood. She titled her map, “Donde En Mi Pueblo Era Un Rancho Solo” (In My Village There Was A Ranch). Elianita drew a map of her neighborhood. She included a tree, her house, a tall yucca plant, her older sister, and a green shrub. She wrote, “This is when I lived in my house with my family. I was 4 years old. My big sister was 6. And my little sister was 7 months. And I went to school over there too” (see Figure 1). Caro, one of the mothers, drew a map of where she used to play in her neighborhood as a child in Mexico. She wrote the following memory to go along with her drawing and then shared this piece with her daughter, Viviana:

Aqui es en Veracruz donde vivo, y estoy en mi casa con mis vecinas. Jugando en el pasto rodando, y despues nos fuimos a resbalarnos en la presa. Es muy importante porque era cuando estaba junto con mi familia y mi papa estaba con nosotros. (Here is Veracruz where I live, and I’m in my house with my neighbors. Playing on the grass rolling, and then we went to slide in the dam. This is very important because it was when I was with my family and my dad was with us.) (See Figure 2.)

After sharing this piece aloud with her child, Caro turned to another mother and said, “Esta fue la primera vez que he compartido esta historia con mi hija. Se siente bien que se les recuerde esto y compartir con ella.” [This was the first time I have shared this story with Viviana. It feels good to be reminded of this and to share with her.] Families revealed poignant and personal memories through drawing and writing. They also revealed a strong and shared connection to family, place, play, and the outdoors. Cintia drew a grassy field with two connected trees and a sun. In the middle of the grass and under the trees, she included herself and her sister playing with Barbie dolls. She wrote, “It happened when me and my sister were playing Barbies outside. It was fun.”

The neighborhood map workshop, along with each of the workshops within this 10-week project, placed the telling and sharing of language, stories, and culture at the center of this community. This worked to position parents and their children as the authorities on their own stories, memories, languages, and lived experiences. It also establishes a contrast to the way school-based literacy spaces are not often defined by the participants but, instead, by outside forces, legislation, deliverables, and formulas. This family literacy model
offers an invitation to put the creation, sharing, shaping, refining, and celebration of stories at the center as a way to honor, learn from, and extend the rich funds of knowledge of ELL students and their families alongside teachers and researchers.

**Implications for Research and Instruction**

This model of family literacy reenvision what is possible in terms of forming multiliterate literacy communities within English Only and anti-immigrant contexts. It demonstrates the importance of language and literacy as a shared, social, and collaborative learning activity (Bazerman & Prior, 2005) where parents, students, teachers, and researchers work alongside one another as learning partners. The design, implementation, and outcomes of this project contribute to a family literacy model inclusive of multiliterate discourses and literacy funds of knowledge, even within contexts where legislation and instructional restrictions may work to drastically devalue or suppress the rich language and literacy expertise ELL students and their families have access to outside of the classroom.

The opening survey and questionnaire revealed that the participating ELL students came from homes where they received influential feedback about and support for their literacy, maintained access to writing tools, and engaged in routine visits to the local library, parent-supported nightly homework, and family oral storytelling. These findings are consistent with and also expand on earlier studies highlighting the importance of familial as well as school influences in youth literacy development (Cintron, 1997; Farr, 2004). The home literacy practices also illustrate the ways in which writing is a sponsored co-activity involving agents who continue to influence these students’ lives as writers (Brandt, 2001; Early, 2010; Prior, 2006). Parents drew from their own funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and linguistic and literacy capital to support their children’s literacy growth and education (Bourdieu, 1986/2011), and they also wanted to take part in this new literacy community as a way to better understand and support their children as students. They saw the family literacy program as a way to open up the seams of their children’s schooling experience. These responses directly counter a dominant and deficit view of Latino parents as not invested in their children’s academic and literacy lives, as well as the perception that Latino parents view school as a separate realm from family or home life (Clark & Flores, 2007). Furthermore, the opening surveys highlighted the specific literacy goals the parents had for their children and for themselves in taking part in the family literacy community, and represented a clear investment and commitment to this community.

This model has larger implications for how we understand language and literacy learning within schools. The project serves as a counter-narrative to the English Only and anti-immigrant backdrop in states throughout the country and as a model for future school-sponsored family literacy projects and research collaborations to support ELL students and their families. At the heart of this study is the teaching and practice of multiliteracy within a school context where this is deemed illegal during formal school hours. The instruction and research that took place in connection to this literacy community not only were strengthened
by the collaborative nature of the work, but also responsively acknowledged and countered the larger political and social context (Prior, 2006).

As literacy educators and researchers, we are deeply rooted in the social contexts with which we work and, therefore, have the ability to respond to, reimagine, and ultimately change these contexts for the better. This project did not have funding, nor did it involve a complicated logistical or approval process at the school level. It was created through a collaboration between a teacher and a researcher, which grew outward to include students and families. We worked together to enact a shared vision of a space where language, literacy, stories, and lived experiences could be supported, despite the difficult backdrop of this work.

This model of a collaborative, multiliterate family literacy program offers a way to create the kind of equitable, integrated, and respectful exchange of diverse languages, lived experiences, stories, and expertise I hope to see more of in schools. In no way does this work suggest a panacea or corrective for racist and exclusionary educational and political contexts. However, this model serves as an under-the-radar work-around for educators and researchers to support ELL students and their families in school-based microliteracy communities, to represent the kind of larger, inclusive educational communities we hope to work toward, build, and recreate on a larger scale.

NOTE
1. All student, parent, and teacher names are pseudonyms.

REFERENCES


LILLIE, K. E., FREDONIA, S., ARIAS, M. B., & WILEY, T. G. (2012). Separate and not equal:
The implementation of structured English immersion in Arizona's classrooms. *Teachers College Record*, 114(9), 1–33.


**Jessica Singer Early** is an associate professor of English education at Arizona State University, where she is a scholar of language, literacy, and composition.

Initial submission: April 27, 2016  
Final revision submitted: April 3, 2017  
Accepted: April 10, 2017