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Katherine Brayko

Reading and Relationships: Leveraging Community Strengths in a Cross-Age, Bilingual,  
Dialogic Reading Intervention

Katherine Brayko

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Reading Committee:

Sheila W. Valencia, Chair

Joseph Jenkins

Morva A. McDonald

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

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University of Washington

**Abstract**

Reading and Relationships: Leveraging Community Strengths in a Cross-Age, Bilingual,  
Dialogic Reading Intervention

Katherine Brayko

Chair of the Supervisory Committee  
Professor Sheila W. Valencia  
College of Education

One sociopolitical factor that contributes to the reproduction of education disparities, many argue, is that current curriculum and instruction paradigms do not adequately acknowledge or draw on racial- and/or language-minority students' existing capital and knowledge. This leaves these students in situations where they cannot leverage all of their resources in their learning efforts. The purpose of this study was to analyze the impact of an intervention designed to build on the language, literacy, and relational strengths of bilingual students in an after-school Latino community organization. Five intermediate-grade students were given extra support via explicit instruction and peer collaboration as they learned to facilitate dialogic reading to kindergarten partners. Grounded in sociocultural theory, this embedded case study examined change over time, and closely attended to the contextual factors of the program (institutional plane of sociocultural activity), students' interactions around text in their partner reading sessions (interpersonal plane of sociocultural activity), and older and younger students' individual literacy proficiency, conceptions of reading, engagement, and self-efficacy (personal plane of sociocultural activity).

An extensive set of pre and post field notes, student and teacher interviews, documents, reading inventories (intermediate group), listening comprehension and oral language tests (younger group), as well as audio and video recordings of five weeks of

partner reading sessions were analyzed. Findings from this study highlight what is possible for students, particularly language minority students, when they have access to a wide range of their resources and when they experience instruction designed to bridge their existing strengths and practices to new learning and new practices. This research also challenges educators and researchers to carefully consider a spectrum of sociocultural dimensions when designing and investigating literacy learning.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

A few weeks into my first quarter as a doctoral student, I received a college-wide email. It was from Dr. Morva McDonald. She invited any and all education graduate students who had an interest in preservice field placements in community-based organizations to come to a meeting. Like almost every topic that was posed or discussed during my first quarter in Miller Hall, this idea fascinated me. Unlike most topics I encountered that quarter in Miller Hall, community-based learning would become one of the central focuses of my academic work for the next few years. I went to the meeting. That was when I joined an interdisciplinary team that would eventually forge partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs); under Dr. McDonald's leadership, our team orchestrated field placements for first-quarter Master in Teaching (MIT) candidates. We reasoned that if candidates could spend time in communities that have not been well served in the education system, they might come to recognize students' out-of-school assets, networks, relationships, interests, and strengths. With enhanced, asset-oriented understandings about students' lives, they might be able to more effectively work with students and families from these communities.

In addition to developing partnerships with directors and after-school educators at the CBOs, our team launched a longitudinal study of the innovation. This work took me into after school programs and community organizations all over South Seattle. I went to YMCAs and agencies for immigrant families in the International District. I went to Boys and Girls Clubs, and a Somali organization in an isolated housing project community. I went to community centers, refugee centers, centers for African American families, Vietnamese American families, Chinese

American families, Muslim families, and Latino families. As part of our research, I observed our MIT case study candidates participating in several organizations. Being myself, I, of course, honed in on language and literacy activity at these sites, which prompted an additional literacy-focused inquiry in two settings, La Unidad and Community Village. I was struck by some of the beautiful participation structures and patterns I saw. Language apprenticeship and code switching thrived. Environments were designed for students to utilize their language and literacy skills in the service of pursuing and attaining socially valued goals (Brayko (Gence), in press)<sup>1</sup>. Some of the students who could have been positioned as deficient (especially linguistically) in school settings were positioned as competent community members in these settings (McDonald et al., 2011).

As I worked as a researcher on McDonald's team, and as I worked as a literacy teacher educator engaged in the mediation of this fieldwork, I tried to envision how the placements might impact our candidates' work in diverse classrooms and schools. Given the patterns and assets I observed in CBOs, I wondered: What kinds of teaching and learning experiences would be responsive to students and lead to real academic growth in literacy?

At the same time that I was asking this question, I was also enrolled in a literacy education doctoral seminar with Drs. Sheila Valenica, Joe Jenkins, Deb McCutchen, and Roxanne Hudson. The seminar that year was dedicated to issues of language development and the role of language in literacy learning. We read Shirley Brice Heath's *Ways with Words* (1983), Hart and Risley's *Meaningful Differences* (1995), and articles on dialogic reading (e.g. Biemiller, 1999; Whitehurst et al., 1994). Reading these works made me reflect on my teaching

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of this submission, I was in the process of changing my name to Kate Brayko Gence and did not yet know if the article would be published under Brayko or Gence.

experiences on the Tohono O’odham and Yakama reservations and in the housing projects outside of Dublin. I brainstormed ways that I could have inquired into my students’ language use and more effectively designed learning arrangements. I also thought about the students I had been observing in after school programs, especially the mostly-Latino group at La Unidad and the mostly-Somali group at Community Village. I began to bring my focus on language development and dialogic reading to bear as I once again asked: What kinds of teaching and learning experiences would be responsive to students and lead to real academic growth in literacy?

This proved to be one of those “burning questions” over which I would obsess. I had originally planned to do a dissertation study on teacher education, and approached my general exams and early dissertation proposal drafts accordingly. However, it became clear to me that as a literacy teacher educator committed to preparing culturally responsive teachers, I desperately wanted to engage in the process of responsive teaching myself. I wanted to be able to share a local, concrete, and empirical example with the field and with my own MIT students, who were educators preparing to teach in diverse, urban schools. I also wanted to highlight for the field and my students the value of community partnerships in educational efforts. And with that, I gleefully surrendered to my burning question. The rest of the story is written in the pages of this dissertation.

### **The Problem**

In the United States, a vastly disproportionate number of racial- and language-minority students do not learn to read proficiently (NAEP, 2009). This is an increasingly urgent issue, considering the importance of literacy for individuals’ life chances in modern society (Berkman

et al., 2004). Various sociopolitical and economic structures contribute to the reproduction of such education disparities. One sociopolitical contributor, many argue, is that current curriculum and instruction paradigms do not adequately acknowledge or draw on nondominant students' existing capital and knowledge, leaving these students in situations where they cannot leverage all of their resources in their learning efforts (Au, 2000; Gutiérrez, 2007; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992).

Guided by this theory, several scholars have argued the importance of understanding students' lives and resources outside of school, including their ways of communicating (Heath, 1983), social and cultural capital (Lee, 1994, 2005), funds of knowledge (Moll & González, 1995), participation structures (Au, 1980, 1981), and language and literacy practices (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). Several empirical efforts have demonstrated that when instruction is designed to respond to and build on students' knowledge and capital, students experience increased academic success (Au, 1980; Heath, 1983; Lee, 2007; Moll & González, 1995).

Research suggests that out-of-school contexts, such as after-school community organizations, are often more likely than schools to recognize and foster children's resources (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Tejeda, 1999; Wong, 2008). Accordingly, these organizations may be particularly strategic settings in which to learn about children's resources per se, and to study learning arrangements that engage those resources. For example, in a previous study of literacy in community organizations (Latino and Muslim Somali organizations, respectively), I found that relationships between older and younger students represented a key resource that shaped language and literacy use in these settings. Cross-aged and multilingual interactions frequently involved older students informally reading to and with younger children, discussing text with them, or helping them spell and translate (Brayko (Gence), in press). These experiences

seemed to reflect participation patterns—and perhaps even values—common to the children’s respective home cultures, or communities of practice (Au, 1981; Azmitia, 1996; Detzner, Senyurekli, Yange, & Sheikh, 2009). These patterns map onto literacy activities that have been shown to enhance student engagement and learning (Juel, 1991). However, they represent the very types of strengths that are frequently unrecognized or undervalued in schools—largely because of the ways schools are organized.

The prevalence and the potential of these cross-age and multilingual relationships and participation patterns among ethnic- and language-minority youth invoke pressing questions for research. For example: “What contextual factors facilitate these types of valuable literacy interactions?” and “Can instructional arrangements that leverage these cross-age relationships and participation patterns enhance reading outcomes for both older and younger students?”

In this study, I designed and implemented an instructional intervention that aimed to build on one group of students’ cross-age and multilingual relationships and participation patterns in the very setting where these already flourished. In collaboration with the lead teacher of a bilingual, after-school program at La Unidad<sup>2</sup>, a Latino community organization, I provided extra support and explicit instruction for students as they read and engaged in text discussions with cross-age partners. A goal of the project was to enhance reading engagement and achievement for both older and younger students. I studied students’ participation and outcomes before, during, and after the intervention.

My ultimate goals in doing this research were to explore what is possible for students, and particularly language minority students, when they have access to a wide range of their

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<sup>2</sup> All names used in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

resources, and to contribute to the academic conversation about design of literacy learning arrangements for bilingual youth in a range of educational contexts.

### **Organization of this Dissertation**

I begin with a review of literature that framed the development of the intervention and describe the conceptual framework that drove my data collection and analysis (Chapter 2). Then, I describe the design of the study, explaining the research and analytic methods I employed (Chapter 3). Four findings chapters follow. In Chapter 4, I give an evidence-based description of La Unidad and demonstrate how the intervention leveraged existing structures and strengths. In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I explain findings related to three planes of analysis (interpersonal, personal, and institutional), respectively. Finally, in Chapter 8, I discuss the educational importance and implications of this research.

## Chapter 2

### Framing Literature

The main goal of this literature review is to examine research and theory that informed the design and analysis of a cross-age dialogic reading intervention in a bilingual, out-of-school setting. First and foremost, sociocultural theory guided both the design of the intervention and the analysis in this study. In contrast to theories that view learning as occurring solely within each individual, sociocultural theory recognizes that learning “occurs in the social interactions between people in relation to the task they are performing and the contexts in which they participate or engage in those tasks and interactions” (Monkman, MacGillivray, & Leyva, 2003, p.247). Context and interactions are particularly important emphases in this study; accordingly, the four main bodies of literature reviewed in this chapter engage these contributing dimensions of learning. Below, I list the main areas of research that most directly relate to the study.

1. I examine research on community-based organizations as sociocultural contexts for literacy use and learning. In so doing, I describe documented strengths and participation patterns of diverse youth in community organizations; some of these are the patterns on which the intervention was based.
2. Because one of the most notable patterns involves text-based interactions between older and younger children, I then turn to research literature on an instructional paradigm that resembles the pattern: cross-age tutoring.
3. Next, I review research on interactive read alouds and dialogic reading. This type of “book talk” activity was central to the intervention.
4. Because a goal of the intervention was to improve learning opportunities for linguistically diverse youth, I review some of the key findings from research about effective teaching

of language-minority students; this includes a discussion of culturally responsive instruction.

I explicate each of these in the following pages. In the last part of the chapter, I once again return to sociocultural theory, and offer a description of the conceptual framework that guided my data collection and analysis.

### **Community Organizations as Sociocultural Contexts for Learning**

Noting that “seeing” students’ resources can be difficult in the historically marginalizing institutions of schools (McDonald et al., 2011; McDonald, Brayko (Gence), & Bowman, in press<sup>3</sup>), an increasing number of scholars have sought to research children’s literacy lives more broadly. Research has highlighted students’ literacy learning in a number of out-of-school contexts, such as homes, work, church, and after school programs in community organizations. It is the latter on which I focus here for a number of reasons.

After-school programs in community organizations represent key learning settings for millions of children in the United States (McLaughlin, 1994); and percentages of Latino and African American children who attend such programs are higher than other groups (Afterschool Alliance Report, 2009). There are several reasons why research in these settings is valuable for those interested in closing educational gaps. In a climate of “more is better” thinking, as recently exemplified by President Obama’s recent call for longer school days, many would argue that studying and enhancing learning opportunities across the entire day would be especially beneficial for students who are learning English in addition to grade level content. Beyond being venues for extended instructional time, however, community organizations also represent

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<sup>3</sup> At the time of submission, I was in the process of changing my name (Brayko to Gence), and did not yet know if the article would be published under Brayko or Gence.

important sociocultural contexts in which to learn about children and communities, as well as teaching and learning.

A number of contextual components in community organizations arguably shape and enhance learning opportunities for children who attend them (Honig & McDonald, 2005). For example, most CBOs depend on the voluntary participation of young people and their families; because participants can “vote with their feet” more so than in schools, CBOs can and must give stronger attention to what their participants want and need (Heath & McLaughlin, 1993; Warren, 2002). Also, these organizations tend to be smaller and more loosely structured than schools, with a diverse funding base and significant presence of volunteers. Their structures make it likely, if not imperative, that young people themselves will exercise significant responsibilities and leadership roles (Heath & McLaughlin, 1993; Honig & McDonald, 2005; McLaughlin, 1994).

Furthermore, CBO staff often share the ethnic and linguistic character of the communities they serve. They are more likely than teachers to live in the neighborhoods where they work, and to position themselves as youth advocates (McLaughlin et al., 1994). It is not surprising therefore, that language and dialect use, communication patterns, and other social practices common to the broader community are likely to be enacted in these contexts. For example, in reference to a community organization that served African-American students in Chicago, McNamee and Sivright (2000) observed: “The structure of life in the community center parallels what we observed in the community where the children and most of the staff lived” (p.176). For this reason, community organizations can be important settings in which to learn about patterns of participation and some of the funds of knowledge shared by the children who attend them (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). These patterns and funds may be more visible in these

settings than in schools, because students are more likely to have access to a larger repertoire of their social, linguistic, and other cultural resources in such contexts (Gutiérrez et al., 1999).

In my own research in community organizations that serve linguistically diverse youth (K-6), I documented prevalent language and literacy participation patterns utilized by students (Brayko (Gence), in press). These patterns, which I observed in organizations that served Latino and Somali Muslim youth respectively, reflected a significant depth and breadth of social and cultural capital. One noteworthy pattern I observed involved relationships and interactions between older students and younger students. It was common for younger students to ask their older counterparts to read to them or with them; they also asked the older students questions about books. Older students consulted guidebooks and manuals in order to guide younger students to construct building-block figures. Students tended to switch back and forth between languages during these interactions, with younger students drawing on their home language (L1) more often than those in higher grades. These instances of cross-age support frequently occurred around literacy tasks that had particular sociocultural significance. For example, in the Latino organization (which will also be the setting for the proposed study), an older student read aloud a newspaper article about the May 1<sup>st</sup> Immigrants Rights March, while kindergartners gathered around him to listen in and point to familiar faces in the photographs. In another example, fifth grade girls helped younger students find words in the Spanish dictionary to include in Mothers' Day cards they were making.

This prevalent cross-age participation pattern arguably reflects values held by the community (Au, 2000). Azmitia (1996) and Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2008) found similar patterns in Mexican-American households with older and younger siblings. Older youth “looking out for” younger children, and young ones asking for help and support from older

siblings, cousins, neighbors, and other community members are patterns common among recently immigrated families from a variety of countries (Detzner et al., 2010). A similar dynamic has been noted in research on Native American families, as well (Rafael, 2000). Despite the prevalence of cross-age literacy interactions outside of school, this pattern often goes unrecognized and underutilized in schools. This is largely due to the fact that schools are organized in distinct age strata, with few opportunities for interaction across grades. Alternately, these cross-age experiences are part of the fabric of some community organizations, where children of varied ages (i.e. K-6) often participate in shared activities, including reading and writing, in a shared space.

### **Culturally Responsive Instruction**

Culturally responsive instruction is a pedagogical approach based on the idea that “students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds can be successful in school if lessons and activities build on the strengths they bring from home” (Au, 2010, p.1). Much work in culturally responsive instruction is centered on bridging students’ “home,” “informal,” or “outside” literacy knowledge, curriculum, and practices with those of school (Lee, 2007; Moll & Greenberg, 1990) to improve opportunities for academic success.

A wealth of conceptual scholarship and several empirical efforts have heralded the promise of culturally responsive instruction. For example, the work of Shirley Brice Heath (1983) demonstrated that when teachers adjusted aspects of their language patterns and curriculum to better match their African American students’ language practices and lived realities, academic literacy achievement and engagement greatly improved. Kathryn Au and colleagues (1980; 1981) showed that when classroom reading instruction took on participation structures characteristic of the Native Hawaiian “talk story,” Hawaiian students’ reading

comprehension outcomes were dramatically enhanced. Luis Moll, Norma González and their colleagues found that when teachers designed curriculum based on the funds of knowledge identified in the homes and communities of working class Latino children, students were more engaged and successful in classroom lessons (Moll & González, 1995). More recently, Carol Lee's (2005) cultural modeling work in an African-American charter school has illustrated that utilizing students' capital, including their tacit knowledge, discourse patterns, and language forms, can facilitate high levels of reasoning around difficult text.

There are two most common ways that bridging home and school worlds has been conceptualized in research on culturally responsive instruction. Some scholars, like Au, Heath, and Moll have literally gone into homes, community centers, and other out-of-school contexts to learn about social and cultural resources and participation patterns; they then brought people and/or linguistic and cultural knowledge back into the classroom. Another bridging model involves researching students in the physical contexts of classrooms, and examining the ways in which children themselves bring their outside worlds into the classroom literacy events. For example Moje (2004) studied students' opportunities to draw on their funds of knowledge in the service of engaging academic literacy tasks in high school courses. Similarly, Dyson's (1999) work investigated resources that children bring to their writing from their social worlds outside classrooms. Both Moje and Dyson analyzed contextual components that facilitated students' opportunities to bridge their resources.

In this study, I utilized a different model of bridging in- and out-of-school knowledge than those described above. I studied children's language and literacy use outside of school and then implemented instruction designed to build on language and literacy patterns and resources in the very context where the resources already flourished. How does this bridge to school? I

reasoned that growth in literacy engagement and proficiency would support students' literacy success across tasks and contexts, including schooling.

Aspects of the interactional patterns previously identified among older and younger students at La Unidad (Brayko (Gence), in press) map onto a learning paradigm in research literature called cross-age tutoring. Findings from research on cross-age reading tutoring illuminate how existing interactions between older and younger students might be further leveraged with formal instruction and support.

### **Cross-Age Tutoring in Reading**

Cross-age tutoring involves older pupils helping younger students learn or practice skills or concepts under a teacher's guidance. This type of student engagement is intended to supplement classroom instruction for both tutors and tutees. The belief that both older and younger students benefit from these experiences, as well as the allure of extra individual teaching time for primary students, low costs, and the large pool of potential student tutors, have provided justification for student tutoring programs for decades (Roscoe & Chi, 2007).

There has been a range of designs of cross-age reading tutoring models. Some of the features that vary across programs are training method, participant age, duration, and activities/curriculum. Most of the programs described in literature included a separate class or meeting time in which tutors prepared for the tutoring sessions. In the majority of the studies, tutors were three or more years older than the tutees—with tutors ranging between fourth grade and college, and tutees between kindergarten and third grade. Most utilized a one-on-one model in which the same tutor/tutee pairs met for the duration of a project. The programs lasted between a few weeks and an entire school year. In some designs, the curriculum was prescribed, and in others there was more autonomy for students. Some required the tutees to read books

aloud while tutors helped with decoding strategies. In others, tutors read books aloud while asking questions about the story and difficult vocabulary words throughout.

The outcomes of the cross-age tutoring have been generally quite positive, with most research in this area emphasizing findings related to tutee learning. In a study led by Taylor (Taylor, Hanson, Justice-Swanson, & Watts, 1997), 1<sup>st</sup>-grade students who were tutored by 5<sup>th</sup>-grade partners as part of a larger intervention showed significantly higher gains in their reading accuracy scores compared to a control group. A series of studies on Paired Reading, which is a cross-age tutoring model used in the United Kingdom, indicated notable gains in tutees' literal reading comprehension scores (Topping, 1988; Hill & Topping, 1995; Topping & Bryce, 2004). In Juel's (1991) study of a project that positioned college student athletes as tutors of struggling third grade readers, nearly all of the 27 young students in the project moved up to higher reading groups, and showed dramatic increases on norm-referenced reading comprehension measures. In interviews, teachers and principals reported student increases in confidence, and performance in all subject areas for student participants (Juel, 1991). Similarly, Jacobson et al. (2001) found that the experimental group of 78 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade students who had been tutored by 7<sup>th</sup>-grade counterparts had significantly higher gains in reading attitude scores compared to a control group.

There is less attention to *tutor* learning in this literature. In some cases only the tutees' outcomes are analyzed and reported (Topping, 1992); in other cases, there are ad-hoc anecdotal accounts of tutor learning (Juel, 1991; Taylor et al., 1997). These accounts typically illustrate reflections of increased enjoyment and confidence on the part of the tutors. A small number of studies focused explicitly on outcomes for tutors. Topping (1995) found an increase in 7<sup>th</sup>-grade tutors' scores on norm-referenced comprehension measures that sustained over time. Similarly, Jacobson and colleagues (2001) documented significant differences between 7<sup>th</sup>-grade tutors and

nonparticipants' scores on both a diagnostic reading test and metacomprehension strategies index. The researchers also reported qualitative differences in some tutors' reading prosody (expression) between early and later tutoring sessions (Jacobson et al., 2001). In one study of a cross-age tutoring project focused on dropout prevention, *only* tutors' outcomes were analyzed (Cardenas, Montecel, Supik, & Harris, 1992). That project, The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, middle- and high-school students identified as at-risk of dropping out of school were hired to be paid tutors for younger elementary students. The tutors' school retention rates were 11 percent higher than a comparison group (99 percent as compared to 88 percent), and their reading grades and self-esteem measure were also significantly higher.

Most of the studies on cross-age tutoring were conducted in ethnically diverse schools. Several authors mention that there were English language learners and minority-dialect speakers who participated as tutors and tutees in cross-age tutoring efforts. Yet there was no clear empirical attention in these studies to ELLs' learning specifically, or students' use of languages or dialects in tutoring sessions. There have been anecdotal accounts of ELLs speaking more confidently in English or using English more often in their discussions about books (Heath & Mangiola, 1991); however, to my knowledge, such questions have not been engaged in empirical efforts.

Research on cross-age tutoring has focused almost exclusively on learning outcomes and program implementation (Roscoe & Chi, 2007). This leaves us knowing little about the experiences of students as they participate, or the *process* of tutor and tutee learning. Roscoe and Chi (2007) and Topping (2001) call for more research on process-based approaches, arguing that a deeper understanding of tutor learning can be achieved via the direct examination of students as they participate in tutoring activities. This can offer additional information not afforded by

focusing solely on the activities' impact on reading accuracy, comprehension, and engagement scores. Process-based approaches, they argue, can reveal important conditions under which tutor learning is more or less likely to occur or be observed. Process data can also lead to insights about tutors' learning-related behaviors. Only one study I reviewed included systematic process-related data collection (field notes of tutoring sessions and student interviews) (Jacobson et al., 2001); this offered information about changes in tutor behavior over time, such as improved oral reading expression. Because of the scant research in this area, however, our knowledge about the nature of tutor-tutee experiences and how those experiences related to varied outcomes (i.e. reading proficiency and engagement), is currently quite limited.

In much of the research on cross-age reading tutoring, younger students read while older students supported their decoding. Alternately, older students did the reading in this study. The older, more proficient readers read to emergent readers while facilitating talk about the text. This type of reading format resembles dialogic reading as well as interactive read aloud and other interactive reading activities.

### **Interactive, Dialogic Reading**

In literacy research, dialogic reading usually refers to a particular technique in which adults prompt children with questions and engage them in discussions while reading picture books (Whitehurst et al., 1994). My use of the term “dialogic reading” throughout this dissertation encompasses the technique promoted by Whitehurst as well as other approaches that promote text-centered dialogue around book reading, such as interactive read alouds (e.g., Beck & McKeown, 2001; Nichols, 2006) and Grand Conversations (Eeds & Wells, 1989). These all contributed to the design of curriculum and the types of literacy activities represented in the cross-age reading intervention. Given the interactive nature of the existing cross-age

participation patterns around text at La Unidad (Brayko (Gence), in press), it was strategic to orient the cross-age activity around text-based dialogue.

In most research on interactive read alouds and dialogic reading, teachers, parents, or other adults read aloud and facilitate talk with young, emerging readers. Although intermediate-grade students assumed the adults' role in this study, findings from this body of research nonetheless informed the nature of the dialogic partner reading project. Several studies demonstrate the benefits of engaging children in dialogue about books: one-on-one and small group dialogic reading efforts have shown positive effects on young children's oral language development and early literacy skills (Biemiller, 1999; Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000; Valdez-Menchaca & Whitehurst, 1992; Whitehurst et al., 1994). A valuable aspect of interactive read aloud activities is that they give children experience with making sense of ideas that are about something beyond the here and now (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Heath, 1983; Snow, 1993). Researchers have demonstrated that the talk surrounding book reading plays an important role in becoming literate (Cochran-Smith, 1984; Heath, 1983; Snow, 1993). However, as Beck and McKeown (2001) suggest, some dialogic read aloud experiences are more effective than others for enhancing children's language and literacy development. Dialogue that increases the amount of children's language production is fundamental in these activities, but research has indicated that the quality and content of children's talk is particularly important for their learning.

Several studies have indicated that the most effective talk involves encouraging children to focus on important story ideas or linguistic content (Beck & McKeown, 2001; Dickinson & Smith, 1994; Teale & Martinez, 1996). Further, giving children opportunities to reflect rather than expecting a quickly retrieved answer was also found to be beneficial (Teale & Martinez, 1996). Interestingly, research indicates that most read-aloud experiences in classrooms rarely

include the type of talk that effectively influences language and literacy development; rather, they are dominated by talk about illustrations and children's background experiences (Beck & McKeown, 2001).

In addition to the benefits of dialogic reading for young children, this study also attended to the potential for intermediate-aged students as they learned to facilitate dialogic reading. Several researched instructional approaches for intermediate readers involve tasks that resemble those required for planning a text-based discussion focused on meaning, such as asking questions. Research on reciprocal teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Zhang, 2008) and Questioning the Author (Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, & Kucan, 1997) and other suggests that interrogating text, or formulating thought-provoking questions about text, enhances comprehension and critical thinking for students. Palincsar and Brown (1984) write: "In requesting that students compose questions on the content, one is also asking for a concentration on main ideas and a check of the current state of understanding" (p.120). This involves activation of relevant background knowledge. Focusing instruction on asking main idea questions is strategic since it provides a dual function for students: "that of enhancing comprehension and at the same time affording an opportunity for the student to check whether it is occurring" (Palincsar & Brown, 1984, p.121). In this way, asking questions can be both a comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring activity.

The research reviewed here indicates that for both primary students and intermediate student facilitators, dialogic reading represents a high-potential activity. There is further research that suggests that this learning arrangement has particularly high potential for English learners, as I explain below. Because most of the participants in this study were bilingual or emerging

bilingual students, I drew on findings from research on second language literacy learning to inform the design of the intervention.

### **Teaching and Learning Considerations for Language Minority Students**

Scholars agree that there is an overall dearth of research on effective reading instruction for students who speak first languages and dialects other than Standard American English (August & Shanahan, 2006; García, 2003; Shanahan & Beck, 2006; Slavin & Cheung, 2003). The body of knowledge is growing, however, and in this section, I review findings in ELL reading research that informed the intervention in this proposed study. With the nature of the intervention in mind—cross-age dialogic reading in a bilingual context—I highlight research findings related to (1) the role of home language (L1) and target language (L2) in reading, (2) instructional grouping, and (3) second language comprehension learning metacognitive opportunities.

It is well documented that students draw on their knowledge of their first language (L1) when learning to speak, understand, read, and write in another language (L2) (August & Kahuta, 1997; Cummins, 1994; Krashen, 2003); thus a strong grounding in the spoken and written aspects of one's first language is an invaluable resource when learning to speak, understand, and read another. It is not surprising, then, that instructional paradigms in which children can develop and leverage their existing linguistic knowledge have been found to facilitate more successful literacy learning opportunities for ELL students (August & Kahuta, 1997; August & Shanahan, 2006; Cummins, 1994; Maldonado, 1994; Slavin & Cheung, 2003). Moreover, the research indicates that instructional programs work best when they provide opportunities for students to develop proficiency in their first language.

Students' use of L1 can be particularly beneficial when engaging with challenging concepts, content, and tasks (Gersten & Baker, 2002; Krashen, 2003; Moll & Diaz, 1987). Moll and Diaz (1987) found that bilingual students' comprehension and engagement improved when they discussed English texts in their native language. In a case study of an ELL student in literacy discussions, Martinez-Roldan (2003) found that a focal student's opportunities to learn were enhanced when she had the choice of using Spanish or English. Access to her linguistic repertoire provided her increased access to literature discussions in which she increasingly shared personal narratives that connected to text. She subsequently had greater opportunities to engage with text concepts.

Although it is ideal for children to be taught to read in their native language while learning English (Anderson, Moffatt, & Shapiro, 2006; August & Shanahan, 2006; Collier & Thomas, 1989; Cummins, 1986; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), this is not always possible. As was the case for at least one student in this study, ELL students face situations in which their home language is not spoken. Several studies have demonstrated that sound instruction in L1 or L2 with apt scaffolding promotes the learning of early literacy skills and strategies (August & Shanahan, 2006; Slavin & Cheung, 2005). This indicates that the type and quality of reading instruction are at least as important as the language of instruction (August & Shanahan, 2006; Slavin & Cheung, 2005).

Numerous studies suggest that ELL students generally benefit more from small-group rather than whole-group, and cooperative rather than individual participation structures (Calderón, Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Slavin, 1998; Kamps et al., 2007; Tharp, 1982). Partners and small groups allow students to interact with greater frequency, giving them increased

opportunities to interact with texts, and to practice and develop language (Cazden, 2001; Valdés, 2001).

Many scholars have critiqued typical pedagogical emphases for students who speak first languages and dialects other than Standard American English. Instruction for ELL students has historically focused on basic decoding skills and/or learning English, and has been criticized for its lack of attention to reading comprehension and content learning. The result is that many English language learners (ELLs)<sup>4</sup> can decode fairly well but experience difficulty in comprehension, which further disadvantages them in school (August & Shanahan, 2006). Mirroring this instructional imbalance, there is limited research on comprehension instruction for ELLs. Available studies suggest that instructional conversations (Saunders, Goldenberg, & Hamann, 1992), and explicit instruction in strategic reading via reciprocal teaching (Zhang, 2008) are promising approaches. Like the activities involved in this study's intervention, these approaches both require students to practice using academic language while deliberating meaning.

### **Looking Across the Literature**

As explained in this chapter, the design of the intervention in this study was well supported by prior findings from several bodies of literature. This is summarized in Table 1.

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<sup>4</sup> My review focuses mainly on research on English Language Learners (ELLs), but it is important to recognize that many students in U.S. classrooms who speak dialects of English, including many African American, Latino, and Native students, can also be categorized as language-minority learners.

**Table 1. Rationale from Literature for Cross-Age Dialogic Reading in a Community-Based Organization**

<b>Area of Literature</b>	<b>How literature informed the design of the intervention<sup>5</sup></b>
Sociocultural theory	Orients empirical attention to learning via interactions and in a cultural, historical, political context
Community-based organizations as literacy learning contexts	Contextual factors of many CBOs (e.g. staff are likely to be from same geographical and ethnic communities as children and families) make them strategic spaces for culturally responsive instruction
Culturally responsive instruction	Intervention relied on the framework of culturally responsive instruction: it began with the recognition of key social patterns, and intended to create instructional arrangements that built on the patterns
Cross-age tutoring in reading	Cross-age reading has high potential for older and younger students' engagement and achievement Leverages existing (and free) linguistic and relational resources
Interactive/Dialogic reading	Dialogic arrangements have high potential for younger students and ELL students' language development and early literacy learning Some types of discussion have been found to be more effective for learning
Metacognitive strategic reading	Learning arrangements that foreground metacognitive reading hold high potential for older students' learning as they think about questioning and scaffolding
Literacy learning for language-minority students	Existing literature shows benefits of: Reading and discussing in both home and second languages (L1 and L2) Importance of language scaffolding (both in L1 and L2) Effective groupings for frequent and high quality interaction opportunities Opportunities for deliberative interaction and comprehension instruction

The review of literature in this chapter revealed a number of limitations in existing research, as well, and this study was well situated to advance knowledge in some of these areas. I discuss these contributions in Chapter 8.

<sup>5</sup> Sources for each area of literature are referenced earlier in chapter (pp.7-20).

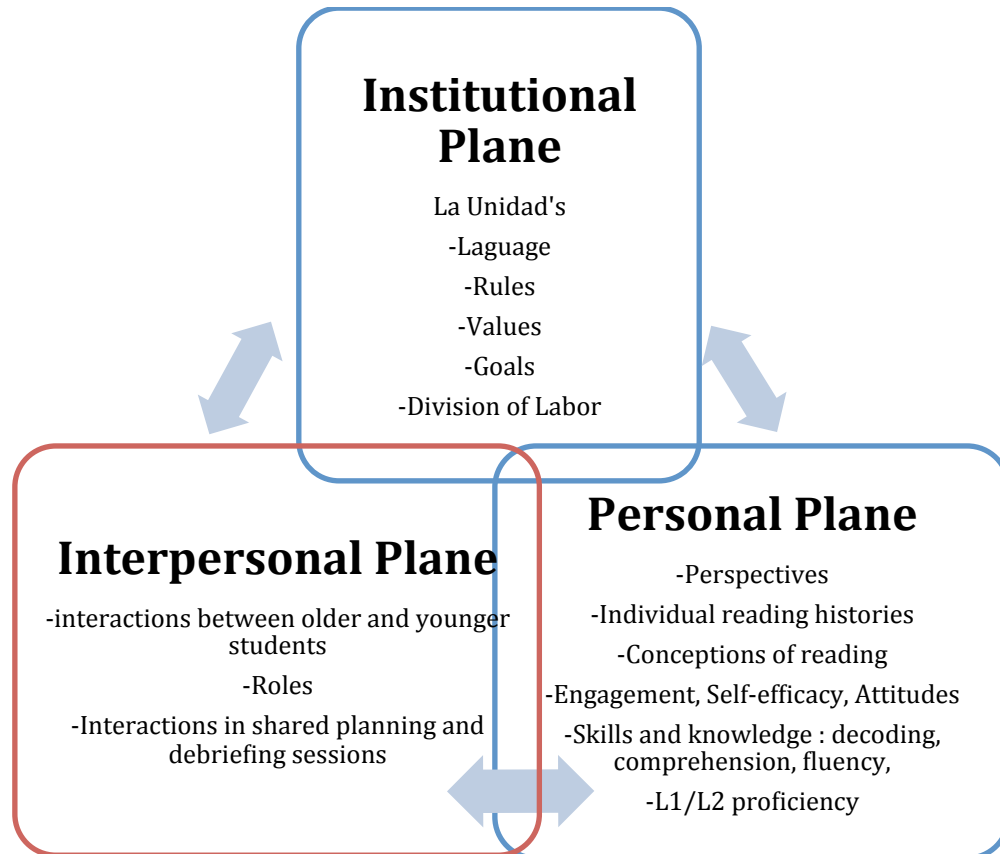
### **Conceptual Framework: Sociocultural Theory and Rogoff's Planes**

Sociocultural theory served as an overarching guide for the design of this study's intervention. Fittingly, it also drove my data collection decisions and analysis. Sociocultural theory posits that learning takes place in the social interactions between individuals; these interactions are mediated by tools (including language) and are shaped context. Rogoff (1995) suggests that a comprehensive examination of learning accounts for all of these elements—the individuals, their interactions, and the contexts in which the individuals participate and interact. She argues that participation in any sociocultural activity occurs on several planes, or levels, of interaction: *the personal plane*, *the interpersonal/social plane*, and *the community/institutional plane* (see Figure 1). These three planes are inseparable, and shape and influence each other (e.g., individuals influence institutions, and institutions constrain and facilitate the participation of individuals).

The *personal plane* involves individual cognition, emotion, behavior, values, and beliefs (Rogoff, 1995). In this study, individual students' perspectives, conceptions, as well as certain language and literacy outcomes were considered. The *interpersonal* or *social plane* includes communication, role performances, dialogue, cooperation, conflict, assistance and assessment among individuals (Gallego, Rueda, & Moll, 2002; Rogoff, 1995). The interactions between older and younger students occurred on this plane; and examining these interactions and associated dialogue before, during, and after the intervention was an important focus of this research. Finally, the *community* or *institutional plane* includes shared history, languages, rules, organizational structures, and values. An investigation of the institutional plane in this study considered the Unidad organization and its contextual components before, during, and after the instructional intervention. Figure 1 displays some of the components that were studied in each

plane in this project. The design of this study allowed for the collection of data that captured activity within each of the three planes. I explain this in more detail in Chapter 3.

**Figure 1. Rogoff's Three Planes of Sociocultural Activity**



According to Rogoff, these planes are “inseparable, mutually constituting planes of analysis comprising activities that can become the focus of analysis at different times, but with the others necessarily remaining in the background of analysis” (Rogoff, 1995, p.139). Throughout this dissertation, I alternately foreground and background these planes as I analyze the different dimensions of learning engaged in this research.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Design, Methods, and Implementation**

In this chapter, I describe the study's design and data collection methods, and detail the implementation of the research as it actually happened. In some instances the actual implementation of the intervention and research differed slightly from my proposed plan, and I explain this throughout. At the end of this chapter, I explicate the methods I utilized in my analysis.

#### **Overview**

The intervention was designed to utilize instruction that is focused on meaning-making rather than lower level skills such as decoding, and to build on students' home language. It aimed to capitalize on students' ability and motivation to learn with and from peers, and to structure interaction with students in a manner consistent with their home values (Au, 1981; 2000). Drawing on findings from previous research conducted in his very community organization (Brayko (Gence), in press), I based the instruction on interaction patterns previously identified, including cross-age reading, apprenticeship, the enjoyment of books, as well as the use of both Spanish and English languages.

Every day at La Unidad, all of the children (K-6) participated in reading time for 20-25 minutes. There were varying reading formats during this time throughout the week: sometimes students read independently, in pairs, in small groups, or one student read to the whole group (See Chapter 4 for a more thorough description of reading time). There were books available in English as well as Spanish, and students found a place to read in the reading area, which had two overstuffed couches, on the floor, or on chairs somewhere else in the room. Younger children

often received help from La Unidad teachers, volunteers, or older students during this time (Brayko(Gence), in press). For this intervention, each of the five intermediate-grade students was positioned as a dialogic reading facilitator, and was paired with a primary-grade student twice a week for reading time. The older students received extra support and training as they prepared to read and discuss books with their younger partners.

The research questions I explored were:

#### Interpersonal Plane

- How does the cross-age dialogic reading intervention influence intermediate and primary-grade students' participation and linguistic production in partner reading?

#### Personal Plane

- How do intermediate-grade students' reading performance (accuracy, comprehension, rate), self-efficacy, engagement, and conceptions of reading change over the course of the project?
- How do primary-grade students' literacy performance (story recall, listening comprehension, oral expression) and engagement change over the course of the project?

#### Institutional Plane

- How does the cross-age dialogic reading intervention influence La Unidad's contextual factors (reading structures and arrangements, expectations and norms for reading time)?

### **Research Methods**

I employed intervention research methodology for this study. I used mainly qualitative methods to investigate learning that may have resulted from the intervention. Assuming a

sociocultural view (Rogoff, 1995), I examined learning at several levels of activity (interpersonal, personal, institutional), and thus, utilized an embedded case study approach. This design involved embedded subcases within an overall holistic case (Yin, 2006). The larger case was La Unidad's After School Youth Program. Using observation and interview methods, I studied its contextual components before, during, and after the dialogic reading intervention. Within the program, I examined students' participation, proficiency, and conceptions over time, looking at the reading pairs as cases, as well as individual students embedded within the partner sets (Yin, 2006).

**Sampling—Community organization.** As mentioned, the larger case was La Unidad's After School Youth Program. This represents a strategic case (Yin, 2006) for a number of reasons. La Unidad is an organization that serves language-minority children and is directed and staffed by members of the community that is served by the organization. There is a long-standing emphasis on community building and community involvement in the program, as well as an emphasis on literacy learning and academic achievement. Also, it is a learning environment that exemplifies particular contextual factors that facilitate cross-aged, multilingual interactions, including interactions around text (Brayko (Gence), in press). Gloria, the program coordinator and lead teacher, decided to collaboratively implement an intervention intended to build on this interaction pattern. In Chapter 4, I give a more detailed, evidence-based description of La Unidad and Gloria.

**Sampling—Participants.** When designing this study, I anticipated that six 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>-grade students and six K-2<sup>nd</sup>-grade students would participate in the study. Of the 24 students enrolled at La Unidad's After School Program, 12 were selected to be participants in the study; in the end, I analyzed data of 10 students. At the time of this study, there were fewer older children than

usual in the program, with no 6<sup>th</sup>-grade students, and no boys older than 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Thus, all of the intermediate-grade students in the study were girls. I was initially disappointed that the older group would not be mixed in gender, for some of the most compelling examples of cross-age language and literacy apprenticeship in a prior study in La Unidad (Brayko (Gence), in press) occurred between older boys and younger boys. Given our school system's limited success in engaging Latino males in particular (NAEP, 2009), I hoped to explore the impact of this intervention on boys, as well.

After multiple discussions about the project, Gloria selected the participants (contingent on parent consent and student assent). Of the eight La Unidad students in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>-grade band, we invited six to participate in the study. These six were selected because Gloria thought their attendance would be most consistent and/or that they would benefit the most academically or socially from participating. Within the older group, there were two students in 5<sup>th</sup> grade (Karina and Teresa), one in 4<sup>th</sup> grade (Helen), and two in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (Araceli and Mariana) (See Table 1). Ceci, also in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, was part of the original six, but was experiencing difficult health and family issues, and her attendance grew spotty. Eventually, she stopped coming to La Unidad altogether. Because of her many absences, I did not include any of Ceci's data in the analysis.

Before the intervention, I imagined that we would select the six oldest students who were approved to be in the study; and that their six K-2<sup>nd</sup>-grade counterparts would be chosen in a way that produced a similar age differential between partners (e.g., a 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade student would be matched with a kindergartener, while a 5<sup>th</sup>-grade student would be matched with a 2<sup>nd</sup>-grade student). I predicted that this would allow for more interesting dialogue for the older students. In the end, however, for a number of social and logistical reasons, Gloria selected all kindergarten students to be in the younger group. Gloria reasoned that since the kindergarteners were the

newest members of the after school program, this reading project would be a good opportunity for relationship building. Also, since there were exactly six kindergarten students and we were looking for a sample of six, she thought it was both a clear and fair way to select. (A clear cut-off helped her explain selection decisions to parents and guardians, as well.) The students in the younger group were: Armando, Beatriz, Daisy, Liana, Miguel, and Jesús. Like Ceci, Jesús was frequently absent from La Unidad at the beginning of the study; for this reason, Ceci and Jesús's original assigned partners, Liana (K) and Teresa (5<sup>th</sup> grade), were matched up with each other for the remainder of the project. The rare times that Ceci and Jesús were both in attendance on a partner-reading day, they read together. However, I did not include these sessions in the analysis.

Except for Teresa and Liana, the other partners were matched up as reading partners for the entire length of the study (See Table 2). When arranging the pairs, Gloria tried to match students whom she thought would work well together (taking into account factors such as personality characteristics and language strengths) and/or who had not previously been reading partners. For example, when explaining the pairing of Karina with Armando, Gloria said,

For this specific one, this boy hardly knows English, and I wanted to make sure he felt comfortable with someone who was fluent in Spanish just in case. I think they will communicate and interact better. And they have not been reading partners yet.

Below is a table (Table 2) showing the student participants and partner sets. These participants and pairings are described in more detail in Chapter 5.

**Table 2. Student Participants and Partner Sets**

<b>Intermediate-grade student</b>	<b>Primary-grade student</b>
Araceli, 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	Miguel, K
Mariana, 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade	Beatriz, K
Helen, 4 <sup>th</sup> grade	Daisy, K
Karina, 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	Armando, K
Teresa, 5 <sup>th</sup> grade	Liana, K

### Procedures

Table 3 outlines the data collection procedures and schedule.

**Table 3. Basic Study Flow Chart**

Duration	Procedure
2 weeks	Observe, take field notes (6 observations): institutional context and participants' interactions  Interview with program coordinator/lead teacher
2 weeks	Pre-assessments, attitude surveys and interviews with 12 student participants
2 weeks	Four trainings with intermediate-grade students*
5 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 times/week (Mondays and Wednesdays): preparation meetings with intermediate-grade students (audio recorded)</li> <li>• 2 times/week (Tuesdays and Thursdays): partner reading sessions (audio recorded twice per week, video recorded once per week*)</li> <li>• Intermediate-grade students' post-partner reading reflections (audio recorded)*</li> </ul>
2 weeks	Post-assessments, attitude surveys, and interviews with 12 student participants
3 weeks	Post-observations (6): whole group and participants' interactions  Interview with CBO teacher

\*These procedures were amended from or added to original study design. The changes are described in the following sections.

### **Pre- and Post-Intervention Data Collection**

Before I began data collection, I spent several weeks at La Unidad getting to know the children, staff, and context better. Many of the students recognized me from the numerous times I had observed in the program in previous years.

**Observations.** I spent two weeks collecting baseline data via observations at La Unidad (six observations). I took field notes during these observations using a protocol (See Appendix A). Through these observations, I aimed to document some of the program's contextual components that could inform an analysis of the institutional plane. I noted the space and activities, learning arrangements, and the ways in which students are clustered. The observations also informed my analysis of learning at the interpersonal plane (see Figure 3). For part of each observation, I followed each of the 10 student participants as they engaged in the ordinary activity of the program. I documented each participant's conversations and interactions, and described nonverbal interactions and the texts and language he/she used. I conducted six observations after the intervention, again focusing on both the contextual factors of the organization, as well as the participants' interpersonal activity.

**Interviews.** I interviewed Gloria early in the study and again at the end (See Appendix C). My goal for those interviews was to learn about the La Unidad context, including the program goals and Gloria's rationale for arranging program activities, and to get a sense of her perspectives on the dialogic reading project. The aim of the student interviews was to better understand students' learning at the personal plane by eliciting information about their experiences and participation, their reading histories, conceptions of reading, self efficacy, as

well as their perspectives about the intervention (Rogoff, 1995); these interviews also offered extra explanation of the interpersonal activity documented in observations and recordings.

When conducting the interviews, I asked each student if he/she would be willing to talk for a few minutes, and we found a quiet corner in the room. I asked for permission to record the interview, and I assured the students that if they did not feel like answering a question, they did not have to, and could erase something they said from the recorder if they wished. All of the students answered every question during interviews, and no students asked to retract responses. I interviewed all of the older students in English. For the younger students who were bilingual, I asked in Spanish if they wanted to do the interview in English or Spanish. The older girls seemed to enjoy the one-on-one attention and questioning, and most of them asked me shortly afterward if I needed to interview them again. Two of the younger girls, Beatriz and Liana, also seemed to enjoy the interview and asked repeatedly to be interviewed again, but the others were antsy to get back to free time games and activities; Daisy seemed concerned about whether or not she was giving the “right” answers—a pattern that was seen again many times throughout the assessments as well as the dialogic partner reading sessions with Mariana.

Previous studies suggest that cross-age tutoring has the potential to improve students’ interest in and attitudes about reading (Roscoe & Chi, 2007). To obtain additional data about attitudes and perspectives, I also utilized several items from the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) (McKenna & Kear, 1990) in my interviews. ERAS is a norm-referenced measure that contains questions about recreational and academic reading (e.g., “How do you feel about spending free time reading?” and “How do you feel when it’s time for reading class?”) Each question is followed by four pictures depicting faces with facial expressions ranging from “very happy” to “very upset” and students are instructed to circle the image which best expresses

their feelings about the question. I did not deem all 20 ERAS questions relevant for my purposes, so I did not administer the survey. However, I did include a sample of the questions with accompanying four-point scale (smiley face to frown face) as part of my interview protocol for older and younger students (Appendix E).

**Pre/Post literacy proficiency measure: Benchmark Assessment System 2.** With each of the older students, I administered the Benchmark Assessment System 2 (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011), a popular informal reading inventory, before and after the intervention. This assessment requires students to read leveled books aloud and then retell and respond to comprehension questions about the books they read. From the data collected with BAS 2, I was able to measure accuracy, comprehension, and reading rate. Previous studies on cross-age reading efforts have used reading accuracy scores or scores on norm-referenced comprehension assessments to measure proficiency gains (e.g., Topping & Bryce, 2004); and one study used observation field notes to account for differences in oral reading fluency over time (Jacobson et al., 2001). Although administering reading inventories is time-intensive, an advantage of using this type of instrument was that it allows for measurement of several components of reading proficiency, and allows for consideration of how different aspects of the reading process interact for students. (For example, using only a comprehension measure can hide or conflate students' strengths and challenges with accuracy, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Valencia & Riddle Buly, 2002); reading inventories allow for analysis across these components, as well as other qualitative indicators like persistence and strategy use.)

There were several reasons why I selected the Benchmark Assessment System 2 over other informal reading inventories. Some inventories used in research have a wide gradation of reading levels (one per grade level), and thus are perhaps not sensitive enough to perceive

changes in a study that would last several weeks rather than several months. Alternatively, the BAS 2 has 26 reading levels (A-Z), which correspond with Fountas and Pinnell's widely used leveling system. Finally, I wished to use an instrument that was not used regularly by students' schools. I did not want passage familiarity to falsely inflate students' performance in my study. Likewise, I did not want students' exposure (to a tool, particular passages, etc.) in my study to lead to falsely inflated performance in their schools' assessment data. Before selecting the BAS 2, I conferred with reading specialists at all four of the participants' schools, and learned that none of the schools used the assessment system.

Field tests of BAS 2 suggest that the assessment system is both valid and reliable. Testing of BAS was conducted with a 498 students in 22 ethnically and economically diverse schools from five geographic regions across the U.S. (Field Study of Reliability and Validity of Fountas & Pinnell BAS, 2011) Validity tests affirmed the sequential hierarchy of the levels' books, with approximately 90% of the students scoring in line with the designated levels (for most students, level S was more difficult than R, and R was more difficult than Q, for example). Examination of the convergent validity of BAS 2 indicates a strong correlation between accuracy rates on BAS texts and Reading Recovery texts (.94 for fiction and .93 for nonfiction), and a moderate correlation (.69) with the Slosson Word Test. Slosson measures students' isolated oral word calling for approximate identification of reading level, whereas BAS assesses "students' comprehensive reading of complete books" (Field Study of Reliability and Validity of Fountas & Pinnell BAS, 2011). Test-retest comparisons between students' reading scores across two different books within the same text level (one fiction, one nonfiction) showed high reliability (.97 reliability coefficient). It was a challenge to secure the time to assess each student. Because of the schedule constraints, I only had time to assess the reading of three books per student

before the intervention, and was able to assess four book readings per student after the intervention (with one exception). I followed the script recommended by the BAS materials for each book to ensure reliability.

I aimed to identify the highest text level at which each student could read independently (highest independent level), the highest text level at which each student could read with assistance (highest instructional level), as well as each student's frustration text level(s). These three categorizations—independent, instructional, and frustration—are generally determined for a particular text by calculating a student's oral reading accuracy and comprehension performance on that text.

I learned in the pre-intervention interviews that all five of the students knew their respective Fountas and Pinnell reading levels in school (highest independent reading levels); so to save time, I had each student begin by reading a book at the level they told me. For the post-intervention assessments, I started each student with his/her highest independent level or lowest instructional level from the pre-assessment, and moved up or down according to their performance. Although I hoped to find the independent, instructional, and frustration levels for each student before and after the intervention, I was not able to do this within the time constraints. However, I did capture instructional-level passage reading data for all of the students both before and after.

As with the interviews, the students were agreeable to doing the assessments, and in most cases they seemed to be at least moderately interested in the texts. None of the students appeared to be stressed by the process, although Teresa reached fatigue after three books in the pre-assessment. As one might imagine, La Unidad is a busy and bustling place. Although I tried to

conduct the assessments in a quiet area, I believe that students were sometimes distracted by the activity of the environment.

To check for reliability of my scoring, another experienced educator scored a sample of the assessments from this study. This additional scorer evaluated five audio recordings from the pre-intervention set and five from the post-intervention set (29% of total recordings). Our scoring of comprehension on the 10 readings had a 100% match. There were three book readings for which our accuracy calculations were different, but our scores were within one percentage point in all three of these cases. We identified the same categorizations of independent, instructional, and frustration in both accuracy and comprehension on 100% of the readings.

**Pre/Post early literacy proficiency measure: Woodcock Johnson III.** For the younger group, I administered the Story Recall Subtest of the Woodcock Johnson III Tests of Achievement before and after the project. The subtest requires participants to listen to a story and then recall the elements of that story. As Mather and Jaffe (2001) explain, “Both receptive and expressive language skills are required to perform this story-retelling task. Story recall measures linguistic competency, listening comprehension, meaningful memory, and language development” (p.122). This subtest, like all components of the WJ III was normed on over 4,783 K-12 students across 100 communities, and has been determined to be a reliable assessment ( $r=.81$ ) (Schrank, McGrew, & Woodcock, 2001). In addition to the WJ-III procedures, I asked an extension question after the retellings of half of the stories (one of the two stories at each level). This provided some information about oral elaboration, one of the literacy skills/behaviors that was targeted by the intervention. This measure was limited in that the questions/prompts I created had not been normed prior to the study.

I translated all of the stories in the subtest into Spanish, and divided the stories into idea units that matched the English version. I used the Form A version for the pre-assessment and the Form B version for the post assessment so there would be no danger of inflated performance due to familiarity. When administering the test, I asked the bilingual students if they wanted to hear the stories in English or Spanish, and told them they could retell the story in English, Spanish, or both. In every case, I began with the same story level (the level recommended by WJ-III for five year olds). Two students chose to listen to the stories in Spanish (Armando and Liana), and three students (Armando, Beatriz, and Liana), responded with a mix of English and Spanish. They also used both languages to reply to the follow-up question about the story (elaboration task).

In most cases, I was able to continue administering items to the students until the items were too difficult to continue. In two cases, I stopped assessing before the children maxed out because the available time for assessment had expired or the student was clearly fatigued from the assessment process; both of these were after the intervention. Two students, Daisy and Miguel, expressed concern about the accuracy of their recalls, as I explain in the next chapter. Overall, however, the students seemed comfortable and attentive during the assessment.

### **Rolling Out the Intervention**

After collecting pre-intervention data, I began implementing the intervention. In this section, I describe the procedures involved in rolling out the intervention as well as the data sources and data collection process for this part of the study. This description includes an explanation of constraints and unexpected circumstances as well as adjustments.

**Setting up partner reading.** At the beginning of the project, Gloria announced to the La Unidad children that she had changed the assigned reading partners, and that partner reading

would happen twice per week instead of once per week as was usual. The extra partner reading day replaced small group reading on the weekly calendar. This applied to all the students at La Unidad, regardless of whether they were in the study. Below is a schedule of daily reading time formats from before and during the intervention.

**Table 4. La Unidad’s Daily Reading Time Calendar**

Day	Reading Time Calendar Before Intervention	Reading Time Calendar During Intervention	
	For all students	Primary-Grade Group (and nonparticipants)	Intermediate-grade Group
Monday	Individual reading	Individual reading	Prepare for Tuesday’s partner reading
Tuesday	Partner reading	Partner reading	Partner reading
Wednesday	One student reads aloud to whole group	One student reads aloud to whole group	Prepare for Wednesday’s partner reading
Thursday	Small group reading	Partner reading	Partner reading
Friday	Individual reading	Individual reading (and make-up partner reading for participants who were absent)	Individual reading (and make-up partner reading for participants who were absent)

**Baseline partner reading session.** When the student participants were paired up to read for the first time, they were asked to select a book and read as they normally would during partner reading. Recordings of this session served as baseline data for the partner reading data set. At this point, Gloria and I had not yet reassigned partners, so Teresa’s baseline partner reading session was with Jesús and Ceci’s was with Liana (Teresa and Liana were partners for the majority of the project).

**Training and preparation.** Noting the documented importance of carefully scaffolded training for tutors (Brown & Palincsar, 1984; Heath & Mangiola, 1991; Roscoe & Chi, 2007), I spent two weeks (four sessions) conducting training sessions with the intermediate-grade

students before the cross-age, dialogic partner reading began. In these sessions, I provided explicit instruction about strategies that can be used when reading aloud to young children, and specifically, how to lead a dialogue with a younger partner about a book. Much of this time was spent teaching students how to ask questions that increase young children’s amount of talk about texts, with a focus on highlighting vocabulary words and scaffolding comprehension (Beck & McKeown, 2001). In the trainings, students were encouraged to practice utilizing both Spanish and English in their discussions. Table 4 outlines the training schedule for the intermediate-grade students.

Due to time constraints and unexpected circumstances (i.e. snow days, schedule changes), I had fewer dialogic reading training sessions with the older group than planned (four instead of six). Also, the sessions were shorter than expected (15-25 minutes instead of 30). These sessions took place in a separate room—the first one was in the hall outside the main classroom, and the other three were in a conference room in the basement.

**Table 5. Outline of Training Schedule for Intermediate-Grade Students**

Day, Time, Students in Attendance	Instructional Activities
Day One 25 min.  Present: Araceli, Helen, Mariana, Karina, Teresa (plus two other students)	Instructional focus: Overview of book talks; introduce different discussion moves like questions, highlighting words, sharing comments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion about working with younger children—give examples of when/how I have seen them do this in the past</li> <li>• Discussion about reading books aloud. What do you do to make a book interesting/engaging to someone else? Explain that having discussions about a book before, during, and after reading it helps us understand it better and helps us get more out of a book. It can help younger partner AND you.</li> <li>• I model reading aloud <i>Me Llamo Gabito</i> with expression, think aloud forming questions that build talk throughout.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion about discussion “moves” I made (e.g., asked thought-provoking questions, highlighted and discussed interesting and/or important words, commented on plot and illustrations and then asked listeners what they thought)</li> </ul>
<p>Day Two 20 min</p> <p>NOTE: DOUBLE CHECK WHO WAS PRESENT</p>	<p>Instructional focus: Formulating open-ended questions; teaching/talking about words</p> <p>Return to <i>Me Llamo Gabito</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion about questions: different kinds of questions help build discussion/language/comprehension/thinking and others don’t as much. One of our goals in this project is to get really good at asking questions about these books—especially questions that get our younger partners talking a lot (and especially talking about ideas from the books).</li> <li>• Open vs. closed questions exercise</li> <li>• Handout with sample questions and comments from the model read aloud</li> <li>• Practice with partners: identifying words to highlight, questions to ask. Students were encouraged to select vocabulary words that they thought their younger partners might not know and were central to understanding the story. They were encouraged to create questions that were open-ended and had the potential to lead to interesting conversation.</li> </ul>
<p>Day Three 15 min</p> <p>DOUBLE CHECK WHO WAS PRESENT</p>	<p>Instructional focus: Book talk before, during, after readings; building interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students share ideas from previous planning exercise</li> <li>• Read through the first pages of <i>From North to South</i>. Model “before reading” ideas (make or ask for predictions, talk about the cover, give an overview of what the book is about, build interest by sharing something you like about the book) and one “during reading” idea (asking questions focused on characters feelings and actions).</li> <li>• Students read <i>From North to South/Del Norte al Sur</i></li> </ul>
<p>Day Four 15 min</p> <p>Present: Araceli, Helen, Mariana, Karina, Teresa</p>	<p>Instructional focus: Planning for dialogue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guided practice: students worked in groups of two or three and planned stopping places, questions, vocabulary, comments for <i>From North to South/Del Norte al Sur</i></li> <li>• Shared ideas</li> </ul>

## Text Selection

I put together a library of books that were at or close to the independent level for the older readers, but above the reading levels of the primary-grade students (Topping & Bryce, 2004). I reasoned that this would allow intermediate-grade students to use more cognitive resources on questioning text and planning discussion than on decoding words. Further, research suggests that students' repeated oral readings of independent level text can improve fluency proficiency (e.g., Worthy & Broaddus, 2001), and wondered if this would be the case for intermediate-grade students in this study.

Because the books were above the primary-grade students' reading levels, I reasoned that the kindergarteners would have opportunities to engage with more sophisticated language, vocabulary, and/or content than is found in books that they would be able to read on their own. Beck and McKeown (2001) and others suggest that read alouds can "free up" students from the cognitive demands of decoding difficult text, which allows them to more readily engage with text meanings, particularly if the reader scaffolds their comprehension.

I selected a collection of seven book sets to include in the library. Some of the books were written in English, and some had both English and Spanish text. Based on suggestions from Beck and McKeown (2001), I chose books that I thought had enough depth to provide for meaningful discussions of concepts; I also drew on what I learned about intermediate- and primary-grade students' reading interests from the initial interviews (e.g., I chose *Lost and Found* by Oliver Jeffers (2011) because it was humorous and included animals in the story line). The selection was also informed by goals of La Unidad's program (See Chapter 4). For example, some books had themes that aligned with program goals of nonviolence (e.g., *Tiff, Taff, and Lulu*), community involvement (e.g., *Side by Side: The Story of Dolores Huerta and César*

*Chavez/Lado a Lado: La Historia de Dolores Huerta y César Chavez*), bilingualism/biculturalism (e.g., *From North to South/Del Norte al Sur*), or academic achievement (e.g., *The Incredible Book Eating Boy*).

Below is a list of books used in the project in the order that they were introduced in the preparation sessions. Immediately after these books were used in partner reading, they were added to La Unidad's collection and available to all of the students.

- *From North to South/Del Norte al Sur* by René Colato Lainez (2010)
- *Tiff, Taff, and Lulu* by Eva Montanari (2004)
- *My Name is Gabito/Me Llamo Gabito* by Monica Brown (2007)
- *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* by Oliver Jeffers (2007)
- *Pelé, King of Soccer/Pelé, El rey de futbol* by Monica Brown (2008)
- *Lost and Found* by Oliver Jeffers (2011)
- *Side by Side: The Story of Dolores Huerta and Cesar Chavez/ Lado a Lado: La Historia de Dolores Huerta y Cesar Chavez* by Monica Brown (2008)

The library included five copies of each of these books. Noting literature suggesting autonomy is important for the success of cross-age work (Topping, 1995), I wanted to allow for some choice in texts; but I also wanted to organize the text selection so that several students were reading and preparing to read the same book at the same time. I reasoned that this would allow for further opportunities to plan with and learn from peers through social interaction (Au, 2000). For the first session, I chose a book that all of the intermediate-grade students prepared to read: *From North to South/Del Norte al Sur* (Lainez, 2010). This allowed for more guidance and scaffolding and more peer learning since the whole group was exchanging ideas and practicing with the same text. I originally planned to have pairs of intermediate-grade students or primary-grade

partners choose a book from the library that they would collaboratively plan for after the first session. However, based on what I observed of the first partner reading session and the short length of the preparation sessions, I determined that introducing the same book to all five students for the next few sessions was a more efficient way to support them. There was more choice on the part of both the intermediate and primary groups later in the project, when students selected books with their partners from La Unidad's book collection.

**Partner reading process.** For five weeks, intermediate-grade students were each matched up with a kindergarten partner. These partners met during the regularly scheduled La Unidad reading time twice per week for about 20 minutes. During the partner reading sessions, each of the older students read the selected book aloud and engaged their younger partners in a text-based discussion. I audio recorded all of these partner-reading sessions (5-9 for each pair in addition to baseline), and video recorded half of the sessions (up to five for each pair).

**Preparing for partner reading sessions.** Before each partner reading session, I guided the intermediate-grade group as they prepared to read a book with their respective partners. Truncated from my original time projections, the preparation sessions were about 15-25 minutes each; they usually took place during La Unidad's scheduled reading time on Mondays (when we would prepare for Tuesday's partner reading) and Wednesdays (when we would prepare for Thursday's partner reading).

On preparation days, after all of the girls finished their snacks, we made our way to the basement conference room on the other side of the building. Because these sessions were quite short, there was not a lot of time for deep discussions about interpretation and themes; this was another way that the actual implementation differed from my original design. In a typical preparation session, students quickly debriefed the previous partner reading session (discussing

what went well, etc.), listened to my introduction of the book that would be read the next day with partners, read the book and made some initial plans about questions they might ask and vocabulary they wanted to highlight. In earlier sessions, I provided more examples and modeling in my introduction; in later sessions, I turned the large majority of the planning to the students.

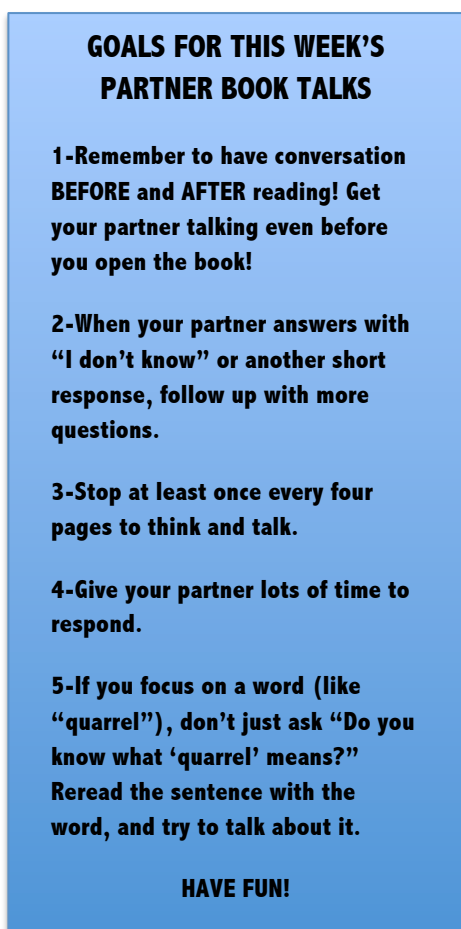
**Post-reading reflections.** In my original plan, the older students were to engage in a debriefing exercise after each partner reading session. I hoped the students would reflect on questions such as:

- What did you and your partner do in today's session?
- What went well about your work with your partner today?
- What was difficult?
- What, if anything, would you do differently next time? Why?

Time did not always allow for the post-reading reflections as I had hoped. Students often had to rush into homework time right as they were finishing their books. With those who were done in time, I either asked a few questions about the session while the recorders were still on, or asked them to talk into their recorders on their own, stating something that went well, and something they wanted to get better at or try next time. (I was able to record two to three individual post-reading reflections for each intermediate-grade student.) To compensate for missed reflections, I included group debriefing time at the beginning of the Monday and Wednesday preparation sessions. This helped me document students' reflections, and also afforded a rich opportunity to exchange ideas and learn from one another.

As I will explain in Chapter 5, I added an additional scaffold, a weekly goal bookmark, to help students think about the repertoire of dialogic reading strategies they could use. Below is the goal bookmark for the third week.

**Figure 2. Goal Bookmark Example**



The goals listed on the bookmarks were intended to remind students to use dialogic reading strategies as they read, but as I will explain, they also became useful tools for students' reflections.

**Preparing the kindergarteners.** In my review of practitioner literature on cross-age tutoring in reading, I noted Topping (1995; 1997) and Heath and Mangiola's (1991) suggestion

to train/prepare tutees as well as tutors for partner work. The day before the first dialogic partner reading session, I gathered the kindergartners together to discuss the project. I told them that we would have partner reading the next day, but it would be a little different than usual. I said that their partners were going to not only read but they also wanted to talk about the story. I said,

They (your partners) will ask you some questions, and they want to know what you think about their questions and about the book. So if they ask you a question, you can respond...and if you have a question or thought about the book, you should say it out loud, too...in English or in Spanish. (I think repeated this in Spanish.)

I held up a book that I knew was familiar to the kindergarteners and read a few pages. I asked each of them a question, saying, “Miguel, If I’m your partner, like let’s say I’m Araceli, and I asked you the question ‘What do you think about this mouse in the book?’, what could you say?” I also asked them (in English and Spanish), “Can you think of anything *you* would want to say about this book or ask about this book if you were reading with a partner?”

During the first week, I noticed that some younger students seemed hesitant to respond during the sessions. I also noticed that some older students were reticent to the idea of sharing of the books and recorders being used in the project, and some students not in the study expressed confusion or jealousy about what was happening. I decided that the La Unidad students would benefit from a whole group conversation about the project. One day at the start of reading time, we gathered in the reading area. I began by formally re-introducing myself. They knew that I worked at a nearby university and that I taught college students who wanted to be teachers. I told them that another part of my job was to learn about what helps kids learn how to read well. “Do

you know what helps students like you get better at reading?” I asked. “Reading a lot!” some of the students responded. I replied,

Exactly! Reading a lot and listening to others read. That’s why Teacher Gloria has reading time here every day...Do you know what helps students get *even better* at reading and understanding books? Reading a lot and *talking about* the books they read. Think about it—if you read a book or if someone reads a book to you, you might kind of just go through it, and then you’re done and you put it back on the shelf. When you *talk* about the book your reading, you have the chance to really think about it, and you can learn more cool stuff from a book if you’re really thinking about it. Now *that’s* good reading.

You know how when you read a book with Teacher Gloria, Teacher Lupe, or Teacher Eva, they ask you questions? They say things like “What do you think will happen next?” or “What do you think of this story?” They do that because they know that it really helps your reading.

Well, I think—and Teacher Gloria thinks—that it doesn’t have to be adults asking those questions and sharing ideas. We think students—*you*—can do it, too! So to start, I am working with some of the older students, and they are learning how to do this, and they are practicing with me. We have the recorders so I can listen to the interesting conversations they have with their partners. But all of you should try to do this kind of book talk! Sometimes when you’re reading, stop for a moment to think and talk about the book. Try it out and tell me how it goes!

At the end of the meeting, I held up the book that the partners would be reading that day. I put a “plug” in for the book, and once again encouraged younger partners to participate in the book talks. In a conversation with Gloria later that day, she shared that she thought the group meeting was important, and that it helped to frame the project more as a community activity. Teachers Lupe and Eva felt better informed about the goals of the project, and there was anecdotal evidence suggesting that students who were not study also began to ask more questions when reading with others (e.g., several text conversations between non-participants were captured on the recorders).

**Social circumstances.** As can be expected when working with real children in a real context, social circumstances impacted this intervention in a number of ways. Everyday, individual students were absent due to illness, family events, and sports. Several students faced very difficult family issues during the time of the study, as I will explain in Chapter 5. If individual students missed a preparation session, usually they just improvised in their dialogic partner reading or selected a book that they had begun to prepare but had not yet read with their partner. If individual students missed a partner reading session, sometimes Gloria and I would arrange for them to make it up at a different time (e.g., on a Friday during independent reading time), but this was not always possible, meaning that some partner sets had fewer sessions than others.

Other times, reading time was shortened or skipped because of community events like a festival or piñata birthday party. One day, there was a shooting outside of Boren Elementary School, which was less than a half of a mile from La Unidad. Eight La Unidad students who attended the school (all K-2<sup>nd</sup> graders) were held in a lock down at the end of the school day until police cleared the area. Lupe was there in the La Unidad van waiting to pick up the children.

Students were very upset when they arrived at La Unidad, and so five minutes into reading time, Lupe decided to gather all the students together to have a group discussion.

Social dynamics between students also impacted the implementation of the intervention. For example, one intermediate-grade student in the study, who was diagnosed with a personality disorder at a young age, had a marked influence on other students at La Unidad. Her moods fluctuated, she struggled to manage her anger, she frequently lied, and her behavior was at times intimidating to other students. This behavior sometimes influenced the productivity of the preparation sessions. Social dynamics between individual older and younger reading partners also influenced participation in the partner reading sessions. I discuss this further in Chapters 5 and 6.

### **Summing Up**

The actual implementation differed in some minimal ways from the proposed intervention (e.g., fewer training meetings, less preparation and debriefing time), but conceptually, the study held true to its design. The adaptations were embraced by students and La Unidad teachers, and all participants were willing to engage fully in data collection procedures.

### **Analytic Methods**

Given the intervention research methodology, a major goal of my analysis was to investigate any notable changes—or learning—that the intervention may have caused (Smith, 2005). As mentioned, I drew on sociocultural theory, and specifically on the work of Rogoff (1995) to frame this analysis. I attended to participation at the personal, interpersonal, and institutional planes (see Figures 1 and 3). These three planes are inseparable, and shape and

influence each other (e.g., individuals influence institutions, and institutions constrain the participation of individuals).

I first examined data within these planes, and noted changes over time in: interactions between students (interpersonal plane); individuals' perspectives, conceptions, self-efficacy, and proficiency (personal plane); as well as changes in the organizational context (institutional plane); then, I examined connections and correlations across planes. Figure 3 illustrates the categories of data sources that were used in the analysis. The categories are organized by Rogoff's planes and the study's temporal phases (before, during, and after the intervention).

**Figure 3. Data Sources by Phase (before, during, after intervention) and by Plane (personal interpersonal, institutional)**

Plane of activity	BEFORE INTERVENTION		DURING INTERVENTION		AFTER INTERVENTION	
	Indicators/ points of analysis	Data sources	Indicators/ points of analysis	Data sources	Indicators/points of analysis	Data sources
<b>Personal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Perspectives on cross-age work, reading</li> <li>▪ Conceptions of reading</li> <li>▪ Self-efficacy</li> <li>▪ Engagement</li> <li>▪ Literacy proficiency: Ks— story recall and post-story talk</li> <li>3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>—accuracy, fluency, comp.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student interviews</li> <li>▪ 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>: BAS reading inventories</li> <li>▪ Ks: Story recall and prompted response measure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Older group's reflections on and goals for reading sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transcripts of post-reading reflections</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Perspectives on cross-age work, reading</li> <li>▪ Conceptions of reading</li> <li>▪ Self-efficacy</li> <li>▪ Engagement</li> <li>▪ Literacy proficiency: Ks— story recall and post-story talk</li> <li>3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>—accuracy, fluency, comp.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student interviews</li> <li>▪ 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>: BAS reading inventories</li> <li>▪ Ks: Story recall and prompted response measure</li> </ul>
<b>Interpersonal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Students' interactions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Texts</li> <li>▪ Language</li> <li>▪ Discussion</li> <li>▪ Engagement</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Observation field notes</li> <li>▪ Student interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Older-younger students' interactions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Amount and quality of student talk during partner reading</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transcripts of partner reading</li> <li>▪ Videos of partner reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Students' interactions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Texts</li> <li>▪ Language</li> <li>▪ Discussion</li> <li>▪ Engagement</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Observation field notes</li> <li>▪ Student interviews</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rules (norms/ expectations)</li> <li>▪ Division of labor</li> <li>▪ Goals</li> <li>▪ Values</li> <li>▪ Learning arrangements</li> <li>▪ Routines</li> <li>▪ Language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Observation field notes</li> <li>▪ Interviews with lead teacher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Same as pre-intervention, plus new contextual factors: explicit teaching and structured cross-age dialogic reading</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Observation field notes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rules (norms/ expectations)</li> <li>▪ Division of labor</li> <li>▪ Goals</li> <li>▪ Values</li> <li>▪ Learning arrangements</li> <li>▪ Routines</li> <li>▪ Language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Observation field notes</li> <li>▪ Post-interview with lead teacher</li> </ul>

## **Interpersonal Plane**

To analyze activity at this plane, I examined observational field notes from before and after the intervention; video and transcripts from the partner reading sessions; and transcripts of post-reading reflections. Interview data were also included when students' explanations shed light on patterns that surfaced.

**Field notes.** In the observational field notes, I focused my attention on students' interactions with one another around text, and focused particularly on cross-age interactions. (I also looked at institutional components, and I included this explanation in the subsection on institutional level analysis.) I began with several general codes like "English/Spanish," "older-younger interaction," "young-young interaction," "interaction during reading." I looked closely at data within these codes to look for patterns, and when appropriate, I developed new codes that nested within the initial, general codes (Glaser & Straus, 1967). For example, within "older-younger interaction," I coded instances of "talk initiated by younger student" and "talk about procedures." I noted the circumstances surrounding cross-age reading and talk and signs of behavioral and intellectual engagement for students during the interactions. I also noted any examples and non-examples of students using "teaching moves" that reflected take-up from the training/explicit instruction. Using constant comparative method, I looked for themes (Glaser & Straus, 1967). I identified patterns by determining if a particular type of behavior was repeated several times by particular students or across the group. As patterns or themes surfaces, I looked for confirming and disconfirming evidence (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

**Partner reading transcripts and video/observations.** As with the observational field notes, in the analysis of the partner reading transcripts and video, I gave particular focus to the

amount and quality of text-related talk among students. I attended to a number of specific indicators over time.

***Amount of talk.*** I documented the number of conversation breaks, and the length of conversations during each read-aloud session. This included a word count of younger students' production, and a ratio comparing the amount of older students' talk relative to the younger students' talk (number of words). I also noted how much of the reading and conversations were in English and Spanish.

***Nature of talk and behavior.*** In addition to tracing *how much* the participants dialoged over the course of the intervention, I also analyzed *what was said* during the partner reading sessions over time, as well as students' nonverbal interactions. I also documented and traced each older student's "wait time," or the number of seconds she allowed her partner to think and respond before interjecting (or until the partner spoke).

After identifying trends related to the amount and nature of talk, I searched for other specific factors that may have fostered the trends. I closely re-examined transcript data, which were divided into three categories. For each reading pair, I identified two transcripts (and accompanying videos) in which the noted trends<sup>6</sup> were most prevalent, two in which the trends were least prevalent, and two that were in the middle. I labeled the categories "productive," "somewhat productive," and "least productive." I looked for common features across the more productive sessions, and compared them to features noted in the less productive sessions. I looked for confirming and disconfirming evidence as themes surfaced.

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<sup>6</sup> I identified sessions in which at least three of the four positive trends (more talk, more even talk, more sophisticated language use, higher levels of engagement) were prevalent.

**Post-reading reflections.** To analyze older students' post-reading reflections (both the individual reflections and the whole-group debriefs), I used codes like: identified strength (self, partner), identified challenge/weakness (self, partner), comparisons to previous sessions (improvement, digression). I was particularly interested in students' references to behavior, references to teaching/facilitation strategies, and goals. Some of these codes were developed directly from the reflection questions (e.g., "What went well?" "What would you like to try to do next time?"). Others were developed as I read through reflection transcripts and used the constant comparative method to note themes as they emerged (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

I traced responses over time, and looked within and across participants' data to find themes—particularly related to goals, strategy-use, self-efficacy, and perspectives on their own and their partners' learning. Also, I examined the relationship between reading session data and reflections. For example, I examined students' reflections in light of how things went during their most recent sessions, and I noted if and how the goals they voiced in the reflections impacted the following session(s). Again, as themes emerged, I looked for disconfirming evidence and alternative explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### **Personal Plane**

In my analysis of the personal plane, I compared literacy proficiency measures as well as interview responses from before and after the intervention.

**Reading proficiency measures.** I noted differences in BAS 2 pre- and post- reading inventories for the older participants, including reading accuracy, comprehension, and reading rate for various levels of text.

For each student, I documented which books/text levels were read, and based on commonly used percentage cut-offs, I identified each leveled book as being at the independent, instructional, or frustration level for the student.

**Accuracy** (words read correctly divided by total words):

Independent: 98-100%; Instructional: 91-97%; Frustration: 90 and below.

**Comprehension** (correct responses divided by total questions/prompts):

Independent: 90-100%; Instructional: 70-89%; Frustration: below 70%.

Overall level was determined by taking into consideration both the accuracy and comprehension performance for the book. For example, if it was determined that a book was at a student's independent level for accuracy and instructional level for comprehension, the overall level was instructional. See Appendix C for a full chart of accuracy and comprehension combinations, and their corresponding overall levels.

For the younger group, I compared each student's pre- and post- Story Recall Test performances (WJ-III) and text-related language production (in a prompted post-story response). Using the scores from the Story Recall Test, I determined each student's estimated age equivalent (EAE) for before and after the intervention. For half of the WJ-III stories in the test (one at each level), I asked the students a predetermined follow-up question. I compared the number of words produced in their pre- and post- responses, the number of vocabulary words from the story that were used in each response, and the extent to which each response reflected understanding of the story.

**Analysis of student interviews.** By comparing interview responses from before and after the intervention, I identified changes in perspectives, engagement, self-efficacy and conceptions about reading and learning. As with other data sources, in addition to looking at individual changes, I looked across participants to find themes. The majority of codes were developed directly from my research questions (i.e. “conceptions of reading”). A number of codes were developed from themes that surfaced in students’ responses. For example, within the code “conceptions of reading,” I identified particular kinds of conceptions that were exemplified in the data, and developed finer grained codes to “hold” them. This made the process of looking for patterns related to conceptions of reading more straightforward and reliable, as I could simply count their frequency.

**Across sources within personal plane.** I looked across data sources within each student case: I examined the pre- and post- measurements alongside interview responses. I also looked for patterns and inconsistencies across participants. As I began to identify patterns, I closely looked for disconfirming evidence.

### **Institutional Plane**

Drawing on observational and interview data, I analyzed the context of La Unidad’s after school program—with a particular emphasis on language and literacy use and learning. Using concepts from cultural historical activity theory as codes (e.g., rules, tools, division of labor, goals, and structures) (Engestrom, 1999), I attended to contextual components that shaped literacy-related activity in the setting, particularly during reading time. In my analysis of the institutional plane (mainly focused on reading time), I investigated the ways in which, and the extent to which, the contextual components may have changed because of the intervention. For

example, I compared pre- and post-observational field notes and transcripts of interviews with the lead teacher to examine whether there were any organizational changes made in response to the intervention.

### **Cross-Plane Analysis**

I also analyzed data *across* the planes. In Figure 3, the arrows illustrate the dynamic and multidirectional influence between the planes; each one shapes and is shaped by the other planes. My analysis included an examination of relationships between components in different planes. For example, I investigated how outcomes in the personal plane related to patterns on the interpersonal plane. Specifically, I looked to see if the students who improved the most (or least) on individual reading assessments also shared some kind of pattern in their partner reading work and/or their reflections; and I noted how participation in partner reading related to students' conceptions of reading, self-efficacy, or perspectives on their own and their partners' learning.

### **Next Chapters**

The following chapters are organized around Rogoff's framework. In Chapter 4, I share an evidence-based description of the institutional context of La Unidad's After School Program before the project, and explain how the structures and patterns gave rise to the intervention. In Chapters 5, 6, 7, I explicate findings from analyses that respectively foregrounded the interpersonal, personal, and institutional planes of sociocultural activity.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Understanding and Interpreting Context**

In this chapter, I give an evidence-based description of the institutional context of La Unidad. My intention is to give context to findings related to the intervention, which will be explicated in the subsequent chapters. More specifically, I give a sense of the landscape of students' social and literacy opportunities and participation prior to the intervention, which might help readers understand how the intervention is oriented within a broader set of interactional and literacy experiences. This description draws on interview and observation data, specifically: interviews with Gloria, who is La Unidad's After School Youth Program coordinator and lead teacher, observations conducted before the intervention, and documents such as schedules and informational materials. It also builds on data collected in this setting that has been analyzed in my and my colleagues' previous research (Brayko (Gence), in press; McDonald, et al., in press). At the end of the chapter, I explain how La Unidad's institutional context relates conceptually and logistically with the design of the intervention.

#### **La Unidad**

The After School Youth Program is one of many programs nested within La Unidad, a well-established advocacy and service agency in an urban center. La Unidad offers human and emergency services including: food programs; subsidized healthcare assistance for families and seniors; adult education programs focused on housing/homeownership, financial literacy, ESL, and citizenship; and child and youth programs including bilingual childcare, early childhood, after school mentoring and tutoring, and workshops for teens. La Unidad is also a hub for community organizing and activism. The agency has a strong commitment to advocating for

social justice and civil rights of all people, with a particular focus on empowering the Latino community.

### **La Unidad's After School Program**

In this description of La Unidad's After School Program, I: (1) explicate the program's goals; (2) describe the setting; (3) introduce program personnel, giving particular focus on Gloria and her role and commitments; (4) describe the student population including noteworthy demographic information; and (5) detail the daily schedule and curriculum, which includes evidence-based description of students' participation patterns in daily activities.

**Goals.** There are four main goals that shape the work of La Unidad's K-6 After School Program: academic achievement, bilingualism and cultural recapture, community involvement, and non-violence training.

***Academic achievement.*** There was a strong focus on schoolwork at La Unidad, as leaders saw academic success as a catapult to opportunity and self-sufficiency for students and families in the community. Gloria said, "We want all of our students to be at grade level or even above grade level."

***Bilingualism and cultural recapture.*** Empowering the Latino community was at the heart of La Unidad's mission, and Gloria and other leaders of the organization worked to ensure that young people in the community were connected with their culture and heritage. Gloria explained, "We want our students to be bilingual and also have bicultural education. We want to make sure their language is represented in this program, and their cultures. Some students come in without Spanish and we try to help them recapture this."

**Community involvement.** As a social service agency and activism organization, staff at La Unidad encouraged children to be civically engaged. “It’s very important for us that our students learn to be involved and active in the community and work for justice,” Gloria asserted, “At a very early age, they (La Unidad children) participate in marches and organizing.” Gloria expressed her hope that students would be committed to one another as well as the wider community.

**Non-violence training.** The La Unidad community had a long history of nonviolent resistance and activism. Gloria said, “We are always encouraging students to be peaceful and non-violent in everything they do.”

**Setting.** La Unidad is located in what was once an elementary school building in the heart of a racially and economically diverse neighborhood. The founders of La Unidad peacefully occupied the then-abandoned building in the 1970s, and eventually acquired approval from the city to lease the building that housed and still houses the community organization. At the time of the study, the After School Youth Program was located in a large room on the ground floor of the center. There were three long tables in the middle of the room; each table was surrounded by chairs of different sizes to accommodate students of varying ages and sizes. There was an imaginary play area with a play kitchen and other household items, as well as a reading area, which included a lounging space with carpet, couches, bookshelves, and buckets of leveled books in Spanish and English. Shelves filled with educational games lined the back wall; and another corner housed the crafts table and supplies. Students’ art and writing were displayed throughout the room, as were photographs of children and their families. Also hanging on the walls were the daily schedule, Spanish and English vocabulary words, writing posters, signs, and pictures of famous Latino leaders, such as José Martí and César Chavez.

**Personnel.** Gloria, the program coordinator and lead teacher, was an immigrant from Mexico. She had a bachelor's degree in elementary education, and at the time of the study, was working on her masters in education through a distance-learning program. Gloria talked about her work with children as a way to help parents and families in "our community." In particular, she said that assisting children with homework took a great burden off of parents, many of whom were working long hours and negotiating other challenges. She explained, "This allows them to focus on other aspects of parenting that are also very important." Gloria arrived at La Unidad at six in the morning so that parents with early job shifts could drop off their children and know they would safely make it to school. Again, she talked about this in communitarian terms, noting that removing obstacles that prevented parents from working and gaining self-sufficiency led to greater empowerment.

When describing her role, Gloria said that staff in La Unidad's youth programs focused on supporting children as they navigated "'the triangle' of home, La Unidad, and school" (See also McDonald et al., in press). She was in perpetual communication with parents and guardians, and regularly visited teachers of La Unidad students, asking for reports on their academic and social wellbeing. Gloria also served as a mediator at parent-teacher conferences, and supported parents in their communication with teachers and schools. She often took on an advocate role in her parent-teacher mediation. She explained,

Sometimes schools don't get to know our students as individuals and a lot of the time they are placed in different situations just for the language they speak so I have students that have been placed in special education because they [school personnel] think there is something else and it's really their language...and then with time we help [school personnel] them make the proper changes.

Sometimes Gloria and other La Unidad staff attended or even hosted conferences with teachers, but another goal was to inform and support parents so that they could have more confidence and know-how to do more of that work independently.

Each day in the After School Program, Gloria was joined by two staff members, and occasionally, additional volunteers. Lupe, who had been on the staff at La Unidad for decades, was described by some of the children as an *abuelita* (grandma). Eva was another staff member; she was relatively new to the United States and to La Unidad, and worked mainly with the youngest, Spanish-dominant students in the program. Gloria, Lupe, and Eva shared the duties of picking up some students at school, meeting students at a nearby bus stop, monitoring students on the playground, engaging students in educational play and conversations, and supporting students with their homework.

**Students.** There were 24 students in the After School Program, ages 5-11, at the time of the study. While the program was for students up to 12 years old, there were no 6th-graders attending. There were six kindergartners, six 1<sup>st</sup>-grade, four 2<sup>nd</sup>-grade, four 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade, two 4<sup>th</sup>-grade, and two 5<sup>th</sup>-grade students. Ten of the students were boys, and 14 were girls. There were five sets of siblings in the K-6 program, and most of the students had older and/or younger siblings, cousins, and neighbors in other La Unidad children or youth programs. According to Gloria, 22 of the 24 students were Latino or multiracial, and two were white. They had a range of linguistic backgrounds, but the majority of students were bilingual, and several of the younger students were in a dual immersion Spanish-English program in a nearby public school. Ninety percent of the students received free or reduced-price lunch, Gloria shared. Students attended five different local public schools, and arrived at La Unidad in several waves as their respective

buses arrived. Caregivers came to La Unidad to pick up children at different times; some left around four o'clock while others left well after six.

Each individual La Unidad student had a set of unique strengths, Gloria said. When describing the strengths of the students as a group, she highlighted their linguistic knowledge and their sense of cooperation. She also thought that their involvement in the community was a notable strength; the students were quite politically active for their age, with many participating in marches and protests. Gloria also shared some challenges that students at La Unidad experienced, including their families' economic and legal circumstances. The majority of La Unidad students were living in poverty, and some were separated from family members in other countries. Some faced academic challenges; Gloria reported, "Some of our students are behind in math or reading or both." As mentioned earlier, Gloria thought that La Unidad students were commonly misunderstood by school personnel, particularly around language issues.

**Daily activities.** While there was some variation in the day-to-day schedule at La Unidad, students typically participated in several core activities. Academic and social development were strong emphases in the design of the daily routine. In Chapters 5 and 6 I give a more detailed account of students' pre-intervention participation, especially in reading time; however in the description below, I include some general patterns in student participation that surfaced in observational data collected before the intervention.

***Game time and motor skills development time.*** As the different "waves" of students arrive at the center, they joined others in playing games either inside or outside (depending on the weather), or they began the daily group activity, which was a collective writing or art project connected to the monthly theme. On the playground, students played soccer, tag, or played on the swings and jungle gym. From day to day, the groupings of students during outside playtime

varied; for example, sometimes the older girls stood and visited only with each other and other times they played with younger girls or younger boys and girls together.

***Snack.*** Immediately after motor skills development, students and staff sat together to eat and converse. Students were assigned to sit at one of three tables. Food was served “family style,” with large bowls and pitchers at each table; students were expected to use respectful communication as they served themselves and each other. One staff member was at each table, and asked students to share about their school days, interests, and families. “Snack time is a time when we check in with our students to see how things are going,” Gloria explained.

***Reading time.*** After students finished their snacks, they were expected to select a book and find a place to read. Many students clustered in the reading area on overstuffed chairs and couches; others opted to spread out and sit in chairs in various corners and nooks throughout the room. While some students eagerly rushed through snack in order to begin reading, others seemed less enthusiastic about reading time, and seemed to stall by visiting and/or eating very slowly. Reading time at La Unidad lasted 20-25 minutes, and had different arrangements on different days of the week. Before the intervention, they had independent reading (Mondays/Fridays); single-student reading to the whole group (Wednesdays); small group reading (Thursdays); and partner reading (Tuesdays).

Until a few years ago, independent reading was the only format used during La Unidad’s reading time. Gloria appreciated the individual choice and reading practice offered by that format, but she saw limitations. She noticed that some of the students were frequently complaining about reading, and some of her other goals were not being met through daily individual reading. Gloria said, “I had other goals, and one of the goals I had was for them to know each other as individuals. So I wanted to encourage reading in a different way.”

There was a sign-up sheet for students who wanted to volunteer to read aloud to the whole group each Wednesday. Gloria said that, “very social students who signed up were happy to have the attention of the group,” and she was pleased to see that some quiet students, who did not often have the spotlight, also signed up to read. Students were expected to practice reading the book before reading to the whole group, which happened in some cases and not in others. Gloria noted that sometimes older students would get impatient with younger students if they took a long time reading during this time, or struggled to sound out and read words. Observational data confirmed this. After the read aloud, Gloria or Lupe would typically ask students questions about the book. They used a beach ball that had questions written on each colored stripe as a tool. Examples of questions were: “Who was the main character?” “What was the setting?” “What was your favorite part?” “What happened at the end of the book?” The adults usually called on individual students to answer each question. Lupe sometimes used the questioning as a behavior management tool (e.g., She called on a student, and if he did not respond, she scolded him for not paying attention).

For small group reading, students sometimes chose their groups of three, so Gloria noted that typically students “get to be with their friends and it is usually at their grade level.” Staff members joined groups of kindergarten and first-grade children during this time. Students either selected books that had multiple copies, used one book and took turns reading aloud, read the text silently together, or the strongest, most confident, or eager reader did most or all of the reading while the others followed along or listened. Field notes indicate a range of behaviors among students who were not reading: some students frequently looked around and did not appear to be listening.

For partner reading, Gloria assigned the pairings, which she would change approximately once a month. There was a list of reading partners posted in the reading area, and students were responsible for referring to the chart and finding their partners. Some partner sets were comprised of same- or similar-age student pairings, and as with the small groups, these students would take turns reading or a stronger or more dominant reader would read for the entire time. Within other partner sets, there were older students paired with younger students; the older students read aloud to the younger partners. “I like that view,” Gloria said of the cross-age pairings, “I think the older students reading sets a good example and has a huge impact on younger students who are learning to read. They look up to them.” Gloria’s purposes for arranging and changing reading partner sets went beyond modeling reading for younger students. She explained,

One of the reasons I did it is so that they can do conflict solving, so they can work it out...which book are they going to read? Who was going to read? Can they let a younger student choose a book that is appropriate for them? Or are they choosing a book that is just appropriate for the older one? So I want them to work in those social issues besides the reading.

In the partner reading sessions that were observed before the intervention, older students almost exclusively used English. The few exceptions were two interactions in Spanish with staff about logistics, and two instances of book selection conversations with Spanish-dominant kindergartners. Some of the younger La Unidad students read or listened to books written in Spanish during reading time. Whether young students were reading or listening to a book in English or Spanish, staff members often conversed with them about the book in Spanish. The oldest student I observed reading a book in Spanish was in second grade. The questions and

responses that occurred after the whole group reading were typically in English, although when staff called on younger Spanish-dominant students, Spanish was used.

**Homework.** Students returned to their snack tables after reading time to work on homework. Gloria sat with and tutored the older group, Lupe tutored the middle group, and Eva worked with the youngest students. At the beginning of each academic year, Gloria created grade-appropriate binders with worksheet activities for each of the 24 students. If on a given day, a student did not have homework or finished early, he/she was expected to find his/her binder and complete some of the activities. Gloria said,

I want every student to be academically challenged, and sometimes they aren't always challenged by their school homework, so I try to put together a binder that is developmentally appropriate for each of them. We want our students to be at or even above grade level.

Most students had more than enough homework to keep them occupied during homework time, and many students found the volume and the intellectual demand of their homework to be very challenging. So based on observational field notes, it was rare for students to retrieve these binders during the academic school year with the exception of a few kindergarteners.

Because students attended five different schools, homework demands varied across the group even within grade levels. However, most students had large packets of worksheets that they received from their teachers on Monday and were expected to complete by Friday. Many students were also required to complete a reading log, on which they wrote the name of each book they read, the author, and in some cases, they drew or wrote about their favorite part and/or main character. The vast majority of homework was in English; the seven students in the dual immersion program had some reading and writing assignments in Spanish.

Because of the seating arrangement, students and staff interacted throughout homework time, and students showed quite a lot of interest in one another's assigned tasks. It was not uncommon for older or more advanced students to help others with their work; admittedly, this "help" usually took the form of doing the work for them (e.g., math problems) or telling them the answers.

**Group activity.** Each day, Gloria or another staff member would organize a group activity. This was usually an art or writing project that connected to the month's theme. For example, in March, the theme was "Ancestors," and students were each asked to fill out a family tree. On another day, students cut out pictures of individuals from different age groups (e.g., grandparents, parents, teens, children, babies) from magazines and pasted them on the appropriate poster. Sometimes the group activity was something that students could choose to participate in (or not), and, depending on the activity, sometimes students engaged at different times (e.g., early arrivals wrote contributions to a brainstorm poster early on, while others wrote on poster after homework time). Again, students who needed assistance with the thinking, reading, or writing/spelling required of the activity were supported by staff or other students. Nearly all activities that involved reading and writing included both English and Spanish text.

**Free time.** After students completed homework (and in some cases, the group activity), they played board games, engaged in imaginary play, read, or worked on art activities. During this time, it was most common for students to interact with their closest friends/age peers, and usually boys played with other boys and girls with other girls. Students who were Spanish-dominant<sup>7</sup> mainly interacted with other Spanish-dominant students.

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<sup>7</sup> I describe the criteria used for language dominance categorizations in Chapter 5.

***Reading time at end.*** Most students were picked up by their caregivers during homework time or free time, but there was a small group of students who stayed later. Most days, these students would gather together in the reading area, and one or more students would read aloud to the others.

***Other special events.*** In addition to the regular after-school routine described above, La Unidad students also participated in special events like festivals (e.g. El Dia de los Niños) and community gatherings. Also, when public schools were not in session, La Unidad's After School Youth Program was open all day to accommodate working parents' schedules. During winter and spring breaks, which were both one-week long, I observed some students who stayed at the center from 6:30 in the morning until after six in the evening.

During these long days, many of the activities were the same as those in the regular after-school programming; for example, there were two to three reading time sessions each day during break, and often extended rounds of free time. Additionally, breakfast and lunch were served, and the teachers drew on student input to plan extra enrichment activities. Students planned and worked a food cart to raise money for Japanese tsunami victims on one day (realizing the goal of community involvement). Another day they took a field trip to a nearby swimming pool. There were guest speakers and Latino musicians who came in to lead activities with the students. During spring break, the students created a mock restaurant; La Unidad employees were invited to be customers, and students took turns taking on different roles, like wait staff, cooks, cashiers, and hosts. Students from K to 5<sup>th</sup> grade were able to practice planning, cooking, and math skills, as well as interpersonal communication skills during the project. These represent the types of activities that were also implemented during the summer at La Unidad, when most students attended the program all day on every weekday that schools were out of session.

### **Fertile Ground for a Cross-Age Dialogic Reading Intervention**

An evidence-based explanation of La Unidad’s After School Program illustrates the ways in which the organization represents a strategic setting for a cross-age, multilingual, dialogic reading project. Not only did the program have an emphasis on literacy learning, bilingualism, and community involvement (both within and beyond the K-6 room), the program also had exceptionally strong leadership in Gloria. The long-term attendance by students at La Unidad facilitated strong relationships, and the many arrangements that positioned younger and older students in shared space and joint activity also fostered cross-age exchange and relationship building. These strengths facilitated rich opportunities for implementing an intervention focused on reading and relationships. While the intervention was well matched to the strengths of the La Unidad program, it also attempted to engage some identified areas of need. According to Gloria, a significant number of La Unidad students struggled with reading and writing. The intervention, of course, was aimed at bolstering students’ literacy learning, and thus fit well with this key concern. Gloria shared that she hoped the intervention might also help address other challenges she experienced in running a program that spanned a seven-year age range. She said,

It’s very challenging because we have students that are developing at different grade levels and it’s hard to meet the needs of each of them as individuals. And also they go to different schools and also meet the requirements from different teachers, so that can become challenging. Also, another challenge is they stay with us for many years so one challenge is how to keep them happy and not bored, so we are always looking for resources and activities because a lot of the—especially the older ones—already know my talents so I’m always looking for new resources.

In addition to being a good conceptual fit with program goals, expectations, strengths, and puzzles of practice, the intervention was also aptly aligned logistically. The intervention activities fit well with structures already in place at La Unidad. Several existing routines like reading time, and more specifically the already-established partner reading arrangement, facilitated a straightforward implementation. In the next three chapters, I share findings related to the intervention's impact.

## Chapter 5

### Findings: Interpersonal Plane

In this chapter, I share findings from my analysis of the interpersonal plane of sociocultural activity, which included an investigation of older and younger students' interactions before, during, and after the cross-age, dialogic reading intervention. I bounded this investigation by analyzing interpersonal participation only during La Unidad's assigned reading time. In this chapter, I give a baseline description of participation before the intervention, which is based on analyses of observational field notes taken during reading time as well as transcripts and field notes from a baseline partner reading session. Then, I detail findings from an in-depth analysis of transcripts and videos of partner reading sessions that took place after the initial trainings. This analysis also included transcripts of older students' post-session reflections. Finally, I present findings from an investigation of interpersonal participation after the intervention, for which I drew on observational field notes and student interview data. Before I delve into findings at the interpersonal plane, however, I first introduce the 10 student participants and partner sets.

### Participants' Language and Literacy Backgrounds

An analysis of individual students' backgrounds highlighted several similarities across the group; points of variation were also identified. Below, I introduce each of the students, highlighting characteristics, interests, strengths and inclinations. These descriptions will give readers a better understanding of each participant, and some of the factors and traits that shaped their interactions at La Unidad and in the reading intervention specifically.

Of particular interest in this study are students' language backgrounds. It is difficult to comprehensively capture the dynamic nuances of preferences, proficiency, and politics that contribute to each individual's language background (Garcia, 2009). For the purposes of this study, I categorize students' language backgrounds fairly simply. I specify whether students are monolingual or bilingual. For bilingual students, I indicate whether they are English-dominant, Spanish-dominant, or bilingual (which suggests similar levels of fluency and preference in both English and Spanish).

I determined language dominance based on a number of indicators: (1) students' self-reports about language(s) spoken at home, school, and after-school; (2) students' self-reports about reading and writing in English and Spanish; (3) Gloria's insights about students' language background/dominance; (4) observations of students interacting with English-speaking, Spanish-speaking, and bilingual children and adults including their parents/caregivers; and (5) documentation of the language(s) the students selected when given a choice for assessments and interviews during the study. I acknowledge that this type of categorization does not recognize variation within groups. For example, there were three bilingual, Spanish-dominant students in the study, yet these three varied in their English knowledge.

**Intermediate-grade students.** The data that informed these descriptions primarily came from pre-intervention interviews with the students; data from interviews with Gloria and field notes were also considered.

**ARACELI** was nine years old and in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at Evergreen Elementary School at the time of the study. She lived with her mom and dad, who had emigrated from Guatemala before she was born, as well as her aunt and two-year-old brother. According to Araceli, she and her

family spoke Spanish at home, but at La Unidad and school, she mostly spoke English. She said, “I always speak English at school, but sometimes there’s this teacher that comes into class and sits next to students that speak Spanish and she translates things and she helps us.”

She had been attending programs at La Unidad since she was in kindergarten. Araceli was active in La Unidad events, and took a leadership role in dancing and other performances. She loved sports and music. She was on a soccer team and took dance lessons.

Araceli reported that she liked reading, especially “chapter books that are funny and that have pictures in them or chapter books that are scary and books that teach you something...like they teach you sign language or something.” She rarely read in Spanish, saying, “There’s not that much Spanish books there (at school) unless you ask a teacher that speaks Spanish at school.” Araceli said reading time at her school was different from reading time at La Unidad: “In school we don’t really have partners or small group reading. And we don’t have couches. We kind of just read and be quiet.”

Araceli had mixed feelings about being an older student in a K-6 program, but for the most part thought it “was kind of cool.” Like most of the other intermediate students, she thought it was fun to sometimes be “like a teacher.” “Sometimes they (younger students) don’t know what to do and we have to teach them,” she explained.

**MARIANA**, a third-grader at Fennessy Elementary, was nine years old. She had a five-year-old younger brother, Miguel, who was also in the study. Mariana’s mom was an immigrant from the Philippines and was proficient in Tagalog and Spanish; her dad was European American. Mariana knew some Spanish and “just a little” Tagalog, but she reported that, “English is the only language I really, really speak.”

Mariana was a voracious reader. She had been attending La Unidad since she was in 1<sup>st</sup> grade, and nearly always had her nose in a book, usually a mystery novel. Sometimes she read through snack time instead of eating with the other children. Mariana said that she liked reading time at La Unidad, and her favorite reading time format was independent reading. Although she thought that La Unidad was sometimes a “little noisy for a place to read,” she enjoyed having more choice in what she read there than she did in school. She explained,

Well, reading...at my school, you have to read at your level, and um, here you can read any book you want. Unless you have to read a book at your level for homework or if you have a science reading assignment or something. But most times here I can read something just because I want to, and sometimes it's below or maybe above my level.

She had one close friend at La Unidad, Laura, who was also in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, but Mariana was generally not very social with the other students. Nonetheless, Mariana said she enjoyed the mix of age groups in the program. She explained,

Um...it's (being in a K-6 program) really interesting. It's kind of fun. There's a ton of different people here. Well, there's kids younger than you and there are kids older than you. I don't know, it's just, it's just kind of nice to like have people of different ages, kind of. It's kind of having an older or younger brother or an older or younger sister.

Mariana thought that older students had different expectations at La Unidad, saying that the older students had to follow the rules more closely since they were setting an example and because they “knew better.” Gloria selected Mariana to be in the project over other 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade students because she was hoping that Mariana could benefit socially from engaging with other students more during reading time.

**HELEN** was 10 years old and in 4<sup>th</sup> grade at Raven Elementary School. She started attending La Unidad's After School Youth Program when she was in second grade. Helen's family was European American; her younger sister, Rena, was five years old and went to the early childhood program at La Unidad. Helen loved art and drama; in her free time at La Unidad, she could be found at the arts and crafts table.

Helen's family spoke English at home. She said she knew some Spanish but "I hardly ever speak it—even here," and almost never read books written in Spanish. During reading time at La Unidad, she read "some of the chapter books here (from La Unidad's library) or I bring what I am reading at home or school." Also a fan of the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* books and "some scary books," Helen said that she preferred fiction over nonfiction. She said she "kind of liked" reading time at La Unidad, saying that it was louder and more distracting than reading time at her school, but she could "still get into" the books she was reading.

When asked what it was like to be one of the older students in a K-6 program, Helen said, "Well, it's fun, but sometimes it's just like (pause), little kids can get annoying sometimes. So it's hard sometimes. I like playing with some of the younger kids like I play with Jacinta (2<sup>nd</sup> grade) and Daisy (K) almost everyday, but sometimes I just stay in my own business and don't bother anyone."

Helen reported that she occasionally read to her sister at home.

**KARINA** was an outgoing 5<sup>th</sup>-grade student at Fennessy Elementary. She was 11 years old, Salvadoran American, and had attended La Unidad childhood programs since she was a toddler. She lived with her mother, her two-year-old sister, and her six-year-old brother, Gerardo, who also attended the La Unidad After School Youth Program. Karina moved to the United

States from El Salvador as a young child. Her father moved back to El Salvador when her parents got a divorce.

Karina's first language was Spanish, but she said she almost always spoke English and felt equally proficient speaking in both languages. However, she felt much more efficacious at reading and writing in English. She said,

When I'm at home sometimes I talk English with my mom but sometimes she doesn't understand what I tell her and so I have to tell her in Spanish. So at home we speak mostly English. With Gerardo, well, we speak more English because, but, well, we (Karina and her mom) have been trying to talk to him in Spanish because he speaks too much English way too much, so he don't really know Spanish, so we have been trying to speak to him in Spanish to help him out.

Karina said that she almost exclusively spoke in English at school; the one exception was when she spoke in Spanish with her cousin "if we don't want other people to hear what we are talking about." Her discussion of language use illustrates a complex language life that involved strategic code switching for different purposes. Her concern that her younger brother was in danger of not learning Spanish indicates that she saw bilingualism as important; and the fact that she felt compelled to "help him out" suggests that she assumed a sense of responsibility for him and his linguistic (and perhaps cultural) development.

During reading time, Karina said that she usually read mystery books, humorous books, and fiction. She "almost never" read books in Spanish. Karina often discussed favorite authors with me and excitedly filled me in on scandalous turns in the plots of books she was reading. Karina also seemed to relish "having the floor" when reading; she often signed up to read aloud

to the group of Wednesdays. Interestingly, she also told me a number of times that she did not like reading, and field notes indicated she was often off-task during reading time. She said she felt distracted at La Unidad, and that it was easier to read during reading time at school where it was quieter. She liked to read at home, but said it was sometimes difficult because she was helping to take care of her cousin.

Karina was diagnosed at a young age with a personality disorder, and she struggled with managing her anger and telling the truth. Power issues and manipulation were central to the behavioral problems associated with her disorder. She was very charismatic and popular at La Unidad, and young and older students expressed desire to be Karina's friend; yet many students also shared with me that they thought she was mean, and were scared of and intimidated by her. Observational data showed instances of emotional conflicts between Karina and staff, her brother, and other students.

Toward the end of the intervention, Karina and her family traveled to El Salvador to visit her father and other relatives, which resulted in a missed partner reading session, and delayed her post-intervention reading inventory. She was nervous before the trip, and "emotional and sad" when she returned.

**TERESA** was 11 years old and a 5<sup>th</sup> grade student at Evergreen Elementary School. The daughter of a La Unidad administrator, she had attended programs at the organization from an early age. With her familial connections to La Unidad, she had been immersed in community organizing and activism her whole life. Teresa was the youngest in her family; she had two brothers who were much older than she: "One I think is turning 31 and one is 24." Her parents, who were divorced, were both from México. She rarely saw her father, who split his time

between México and United States. Teresa expressed interest in writing stories, and she loved listening to music and playing soccer.

Teresa was bilingual. She said, “I understand everything people say when they’re speaking Spanish,” but that she herself, almost always used English. “At home and here my mom talks to me in Spanish and I answer back in English,” she explained. “I can speak Spanish, too, but sometimes I forget words and have to say them in English.”

A fan of scary stories, Teresa enjoyed reading the Twilight vampire series and “all kinds of freaky stuff.” She also liked books about Justin Beiber and funny stories. Teresa almost exclusively read books written in English, but read Spanish books “once in awhile if I ever find any that looks interesting.” She said she liked reading time at La Unidad: “It’s kind of my peaceful time, like time for myself...that’s how it feels.” She thought that reading time at school was fairly similar to La Unidad’s. “One difference is that we have couches here (at La Unidad),” she said, “It’s more squishy (crowded), but that’s okay.” In addition to reading time at la Unidad, Teresa also read at home. She explained,

Ya, I read for an hour at home because my teacher makes us read and she makes us write it down and what level book, and if we read it at home, and what time, and what page to what page. She usually wants us to read for a half an hour, but I usually read an extra half an hour.

Teresa remembered the days when she was one of the youngest students at La Unidad’s After School Youth Program. Now that she was one of the older students herself, she said “it’s kind of weird, ‘cause we’re mixed up with kindergartners and I feel so tall.” She sometimes played

board games and twister with her younger counterparts, saying, “Sometimes they (younger students) ask me.” She was much less likely to ask *them* to play.

Like Karina, Teresa was experiencing some difficulties at the time of the study. One day, while I was visiting with Teresa at La Unidad, her jaw dropped when a man walked in the room and conversed in Spanish with the children there; her body shook, and she exclaimed, “I haven’t seen him for a long, long time.” It was her father. She began to cry. Seemingly embarrassed about her tears, she told her dad and other students that she had allergies and her eyes were itchy. Teresa’s attendance at La Unidad became less consistent during her father’s visit; she also got suspended from school for behavioral issues for a day during the course of the study. Her teacher reported to Gloria that Teresa was not completing her homework as consistently as before.

**Looking across the group.** Overall, this group represents five different ethnicities, three public schools, and three grade levels. All of the girls had some exposure to English and Spanish, and three of them were completely bilingual; those three students spoke or heard Spanish regularly at home. However, all five students spoke mostly English at La Unidad, and read almost exclusively in English.

One student reported that she did not like to read (Karina), but all five—including Karina—expressed interest in books and reported that they either liked or “kind of liked” reading time at La Unidad. Fiction, funny stories, and scary stories topped the list of favorite reading material for the group. Their appreciation for reading and their favorable attitudes about reading time at La Unidad likely made them more willing to engage in the partner reading intervention.

All of the students had siblings; interestingly, four of the five were the eldest in their families. Three of the four read to younger siblings in their families (at least sometimes). They

all expressed mixed but mostly positive feelings about being among the older students in a K-6 program, and all thought that there were extra or different expectations of older students to be leaders and to help the younger children. Students likely brought these experiences and conceptions to bear in their partner reading.

**Kindergarten students.** Again, the analysis of individual students' backgrounds was based primarily on interviews conducted before the intervention. As could be expected, interviews with these five- and six-year-old students yielded less information than interviews with their older counterparts. Nonetheless, the descriptions will give readers a better understanding of each participant, and some of the factors and traits that shaped their participation at La Unidad and in the reading intervention specifically. The participants are introduced in an order that parallels their intermediate-grade reading partners.

**MIGUEL**, Araceli's partner, was a creative and precocious boy, known for his chess prowess and his elaborate Leggo models. His sixth birthday occurred several weeks into the intervention, and was celebrated with a robot piñata party at La Unidad. Like his older sister, Mariana, Miguel attended Fennessy Elementary School, and was enrolled in a K-1 classroom. He said that he knew "Filipino, Spanish, and English," but he usually spoke English at school, La Unidad, and at home. He said his mom could speak "Filipino" (Tagalog) and Spanish. Miguel reported said that he liked reading, and when I asked him what he liked to read, he jumped up and excitedly said, "I'll show you!" He especially enjoyed comic books and books about Batman and other superheroes.

When reflecting on what it was like to be in a K-6 program, Miguel said, "Sometimes I feel very...frightened...because the kids are older and bigger." He did not usually interact with

older students. In fact, he said, “I don’t do anything with the older kids.” After I reminded him that he sometimes read with older students during partner or group reading, he said “Ya I kind of like it...because I like reading.” He liked reading independently best, and thought of himself as a good reader. He also thought his dad was a good reader because “he reads chapter books.”

**BEATRIZ** was five years old, and was Helen’s partner during the study. She attended Boren Elementary School, which offered a dual immersion program, but her parents enrolled her in the English-only program. Beatriz was one of the youngest and smallest students at La Unidad, but she had a strong personality and played and giggled with a range of La Unidad students, boys and girls, her age as well as older students. Beatriz had one younger sister, Anabel, who was one year behind her and attended the pre-school at La Unidad. Her parents were both from México, and always spoke in Spanish with Gloria when they came to La Unidad. Beatriz said she spoke Spanish at home, but spoke English at school and both at La Unidad “but English more a lot.” Gloria noticed that Beatriz was using Spanish less and less, so she made an effort to speak in Spanish with her as often as possible.

Beatriz did not share much about her reading interests before the intervention. She said that she did not like reading time at La Unidad, but when asked why, replied, “I don’t know.” She thought of herself as a good reader, saying “Sure! Because I like to.” When asked before the intervention how someone gets better at reading, she replied, “I don’t know,” yet Beatriz’s reading performance and confidence took off over the course of the project.

**DAISY** was six years old and in kindergarten at Raven Elementary School. Born in Guatemala, Daisy was adopted by her white, American parents when she was a baby. She had a nine-year-old sister, Laura, who was not adopted. Laura was the best friend of Mariana, Daisy’s

reading partner during the study. At La Unidad, Daisy spoke “English and sometimes Spanish” at La Unidad, and English at home and at school.

Daisy excelled in school and in sports. She demonstrated qualities of a perfectionist. La Unidad teachers noticed that she was uncomfortable in situations in which she could potentially “be wrong” or “lose at something.” For example, she enjoyed having Eva and other students try to guess items on the top-ten lists in the game “Outburst” (and she was forthcoming with critiques of their performance), but she always refused to be the guesser herself. As I will explain in Chapter 6, this quality seemed to influence her engagement in partner reading with Mariana, a student who was known as the strongest reader in the program. Daisy had a keen sense of humor and often made other La Unidad students laugh; sometimes she teased other students, which caused occasional conflicts.

Daisy thought of herself as a good reader because she could “read big words by sounding them out.” She enjoyed Arthur books, and liked reading independently or with a friend the most. When describing her experiences with partner reading with older students, she said, “and older kid reads to me and I sit there and listen.” Daisy said she enjoyed reading time, and said it was different than reading at school because the La Unidad teachers spoke to the students in Spanish.

**ARMANDO**, Karina’s reading partner, was a five-year-old kindergarten student in the Spanish-English dual language immersion program at Boren Elementary School. His mother was from México and his father was from Guatemala, and he had an older sister (age eight) and a younger brother (age two). Armando was boisterous when on the soccer pitch, climbing the jungle gym, or interacting with his buddies, but was usually soft spoken and shy in the La

Unidad classroom. He primarily spoke Spanish at home, school, and La Unidad, but Gloria noticed he was beginning to use more English.

Armando said he enjoyed being in a program with students of different ages, because he liked “to go to their house after school.” By this, I gathered that he was referring to Raúl, the 2<sup>nd</sup>-grade older brother of Armando’s best friend, Jesús, as Armando would sometimes go home with the brothers. Armando did not typically interact with students who were older than 2<sup>nd</sup> grade; this may have been in part due to his reserved demeanor, the fact that older students typically spoke English, or because he seemed to prefer to spend time with other boys (all of the oldest students at La Unidad were girls).

A fan of Sponge Bob books and “seek and find” books, Armando was usually eager to begin reading time after snack. During reading time, he often teamed up with other students, usually Jesús and Raúl, to listen to them read. Armando was just beginning to decode words (in Spanish) and to date had received literacy instruction exclusively in Spanish.

**LIANA** was six years old and in kindergarten at Fennessy Elementary School. Her parents, who were immigrants from México, owned a Mexican restaurant a few blocks away from La Unidad. She lived with a blended family and had one younger brother (age four), and three older brothers: Juan, who was in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and also attended La Unidad’s After School Program, and Marco and Tomás, who were teenagers. Liana said she spoke Spanish with her family at home, both English at Spanish at La Unidad, and only English at school.

Liana was an energetic, athletic girl, who liked to dance, run, and play soccer. She once told me that P.E. was the only thing she liked about school. She did not seem to think of herself as a reader when interviewed before the intervention. When discussing partner reading, she

emphasized, “My partner reads to *me*.” The interview excerpt below also suggests her self-identification as a non-reader.

KB: How does someone get better at reading?

Liana: Because you’re reading with me.

KB: Someone can get better at reading when other people read with them?

Liana: Ya.

KB: You think that helps you?

Liana: Ya

KB: Why?

Liana: Other people know how to read.

Liana said that she “kind of liked” reading time, because she liked to read but also thought it was boring.

**Looking across the group.** The five kindergarten participants attended three different public schools—all of which were very ethnically diverse. The majority of the younger group had Chicano backgrounds, with four of the five having at least some of their family roots in México. Three of these students, Armando, Beatriz, and Liana, spoke Spanish at home; these same students and were classified as Spanish-dominant. The other two students, Daisy and Miguel, spoke English at home and were English-dominant. Students’ L1 and L2 proficiency, and the language dynamic relationship with their partners who were either bilingual or English-dominant, were key factors influencing participation in partner reading.

All the kindergarten students expressed interest in interacting with older students in their pre-intervention interviews. Only Miguel seemed guarded about the idea, but he explained that

his anxiety about older students was trumped by his interest in reading. I should note that Armando's positive feelings about interacting with older students seemed to be exclusively in reference to older boys at La Unidad. These five students were used to sharing time and space with older children. Four of the five kindergarten participants had older siblings and three had older siblings in the La Unidad After School Program. Their experiences with and attitudes about interacting with older students likely influenced their participation in cross-age partner reading during the intervention.

The students were also used to reading every day at La Unidad, and they almost always read with at least one other student or staff member. Miguel and Armando both reported to like reading time at La Unidad before the intervention; Daisy and Liana "kind of liked" reading time, and Beatriz said that she did not like it. This group demonstrated a range in proficiency and confidence in reading. They also had a range of exposure to Spanish and English text.

**Partner sets.** In Table 5, I outline key attributes of partners' backgrounds, as well as information about the number of dialogic partner sessions they had together during the intervention. Variation in attendance led to different numbers of sessions across the pairs. There were times when students participated in dialogic partner reading with students other than their assigned partners, so in addition to the number of sessions the partner sets shared together, I also indicate the total number of sessions in which each individual had the opportunity to engage in dialogic partner reading activity. The table also includes the language(s) most often used by the five partner sets when reading and discussing books.

**Table 6. Partner Sets**

<b>Intermediate-grade partner</b> (Grade, language background, ethnicity)	<b>Kindergarten partner</b> (Age, language background, ethnicity)	<b># of partner reading sessions</b>	<b>Language(s) most typically used in sessions</b>
<b>Araceli, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade</b> Bilingual (L1=Spanish) Guatemalan American	<b>Miguel, 5 years*</b> Bilingual: English-dominant Filipino-Euro American	7 together (Araceli-8 Miguel-7)	Reading: English Discussion: English
<b>Mariana, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade</b> Bilingual: English-dominant Filipina-Euro American	<b>Daisy, 6 years</b> Bilingual: English-dominant Guatemalan American	9 together	Reading: English Discussion: English
<b>Helen, 4<sup>th</sup> grade</b> Monolingual English European American	<b>Beatriz, 5 years*</b> Bilingual: Spanish-dominant Mexican American	7 together (Helen-8 Beatriz-8)	Reading; English Discussion: English
<b>Karina, 5<sup>th</sup> grade</b> Bilingual (L1=Spanish) Salvadoran American	<b>Armando, 5 years</b> Bilingual: Spanish-dominant Mexican-Guatemalan American	8 together (final session also with Liana)	Reading: Spanish/English Discussion: Spanish
<b>Teresa, 5<sup>th</sup> grade</b> Bilingual (L1=Spanish) Mexican American	<b>Liana, 6 years</b> Bilingual: Spanish-dominant Mexican American	5 together Teresa-6 Liana-8	Reading: Mostly English Discussion: Spanish

\*Turned 6 years-old during the project

None of the partner sets were siblings or cousins, and none of the pairs attended the same school.

### **Interpersonal Activity Before Intervention**

To document a baseline of students' activity and interactions at the start of the study, I conducted observations for two weeks (six observations, 12 hours total) before the intervention, and recorded and transcribed an initial partner reading sessions with the study's assigned pairs. In this analysis, I only include the observations conducted during reading time (six observations, 20-30 minutes each).

**Observations.** Field notes from observations conducted at La Unidad showed that there was a great deal of interaction among students and staff, and many of these interactions involved text. This reaffirmed previous findings from studies in La Unidad and other youth-serving community-based organizations (Brayko (Gence), in press). As mentioned in Chapter 4, various participation arrangements (coupled with some students' dispositions toward cross-age

relationships) positioned older and younger students in contact with one another during reading time before the intervention.

In my examination of reading time, I gave particular attention to students' participation in partner and small group reading. I found that in almost every instance, these interactions consisted of an older or more able reader reading aloud, with younger or less confident reader(s) listening (or not listening). There was little discussion during this time, except in the cases of partners and small groups reading "seek and find" books, where they search for hidden objects in photographed scenes (note: there was almost no text in these books), and in the cases of partners and small groups that included a La Unidad teacher. The teachers—especially Gloria—stopped occasionally to discuss the story or to elicit predictions. An analysis of the small amount of dialogue that occurred between students during reading time showed that the talk was focused on logistics or tangential topics unrelated to the reading.

Of the younger participants, Miguel seemed to be the most engaged in reading time, and eagerly responded to Gloria's prompts. Some of the younger students looked around rather than focusing on the book, and/or engaged in side conversations. According to field notes, Liana, Armando, Beatriz, and Daisy were observed to be "checked out" several minutes each during partner or small group reading; Liana seemed to be the most frequently distracted student in the group.

Almost all of the partner and small group reading that involved older students was in English. In fact, I did not observe older children using Spanish with each other during reading time at all. I did observe Spanish being utilized among Spanish-dominant K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade students, and between staff and students.

**Recorded partner reading session.** Trends noted in the observational data were reaffirmed in the analysis of transcripts from the baseline partner reading session. Older students read to the younger students, and generally, they did not discuss books. Again, Miguel was an exception: in his baseline session with Araceli, he commented once during the story, tried to read along a couple of times, repeated a line of the story aloud, and exclaimed, “The End!” when Araceli finished reading. This paralleled reading behaviors he exhibited during observations, and indicated that Miguel was the kindergarten student who was most primed for the kinds of interactions involved in dialogic reading.

Video data suggested that all of the younger students appeared to be engaged in listening to their partners’ reading at least some of the time during the baseline session. Some students looked away and did not appear to be listening at times. This was most common with Liana, Daisy, and Armando (in that order). When the younger students lost interest and/or attention, there was no visible evidence of older students trying to employ strategies to re-engage them; they simply kept reading.

### **Interpersonal Activity During the Intervention**

My data collection and analysis of interpersonal activity during the intervention was mainly focused on the partner reading sessions. Below I describe students’ interactions early in the project, explicate trends in reading sessions and older students’ reflections over time, and identify contributing factors shaping those trends.

**Early partner reading sessions.** Leading up to the first dialogic partner reading session, I had approached the preparation as a full cycle of explicit instruction with a systematic, gradual release of responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). Specifically, I began with very explicit

explanations of dialogic reading strategies, provided substantial modeling, and engaged students in guided practice. I thought of the planning and implementation of the first partner reading session as the students' first real independent practice opportunity within the gradual release model. Transcripts from the first session indicated that there was little take-up of dialogic reading strategies by the students. The number of words produced in conversations was quite low, with the exception of Mariana and Daisy's session. Mariana facilitated a discussion about the book *From North to South/Del Norte al Sur* (Lainez, 2010), and prompted Daisy to reflect about families affected by immigration. Although Daisy strayed from the conversation several times, she produced 98 words in her comments that were related to the reading—a figure much higher than her peers' word counts. (The mean number of words produced in the first session from the others was 12.)

An examination of the transcripts from this session illuminated reasons behind the group's stilted dialogue. Older students did little before they started reading to engage younger students, and rarely stopped to discuss. There were several examples of meaningful exchanges across the group, but generally, even when the older students did stop to ask questions or share ideas, their attempts did not elicit much talk from younger partners. There were several instances of students asking questions that were quite different from those modeled or practiced in the training sessions. This excerpt from Araceli and Miguel's first session is an example of this:

Araceli: (After two minutes of reading) Do you think you don't know any words from what I just read? Look through here. (Hands Miguel the book)

Miguel: Uh..no... (2 seconds)

Araceli: No? ok. (Continues to read)

This exchange is representative of Araceli and Miguel's entire session, and indicates that Araceli began at a low level of dialogic reading proficiency. I am not sure why Araceli defaulted to this style of facilitation; it is possible that she had experienced such "meaning checks" from teachers or other adults. She and Karina were on the low end of the group in their early attempts to implementation of dialogic reading. Other students showed at least slightly higher proficiency, but overall, the quantity and quality of talk was modest across the group.

It was clear to me that the students needed more explicit instruction and guided practice opportunities if they were going to be able to learn to facilitate effective dialogic reading with their partners. I reasserted more instructional control, and heavily guided the preparation for the second session. All five intermediate students and I read through the book *Tiff, Taff, and Lulu* (Montanari, 2004) together. I modeled and suggested some questions they could ask before reading, and encouraged them to write down on sticky notes what they planned to say or do. As we read through the book together, I made more suggestions, and several students gave suggestions as well. The girls wrote down the questions they planned to ask and the vocabulary words they planned to highlight or teach on sticky notes. Most the students' plans were very similar. Some were nearly identical. However, there was a notable range in their implementation during the partner reading sessions the following day. Four of the five partner sets improved in the amount of dialogue produced (all but Karina and Armando), but implementation of dialogic reading strategies was still somewhat limited across the group. The intermediate-grade students seemed to be fixated on reading exactly what they had written on the sticky notes, which in some cases caused the exchanges to seem awkward and forced, rather than conversational and engaging.

I continued to provide some explicit instruction during the next few planning sessions, but I scaled back my modeling each time. As mentioned in Chapter 3, I introduced the “Weekly Book Talk Goals” bookmarks before the third session, and from that point on, those were used as tools for my instruction, as well as students’ planning and self-reflection. Students were encouraged to bring the bookmarks with them to the partner reading sessions. Some students also continued to use sticky notes as guides or reminders in subsequent sessions (if/when they had the opportunity to plan beforehand).

**Trends over time—Partner reading sessions.** In my in-depth examination of all of the transcripts from the partner reading sessions, I noticed several salient trends that emerged over the five weeks: greater quantity of text-focused dialogue; more equitable ratio of talk between older and younger students; increased use of sophisticated vocabulary by older and younger students; and enhanced engagement in both groups. These trends held true for all five reading pairs, although the trends were more pronounced in some of the partner sets than others. Also, the trajectory of the pairs differed: some trends emerged early on for some pairs, while the same trends did not surface in other pairs’ sessions until much later in the project. Below I explicate each trend in more detail, give examples, and share exceptions.

***Greater amount of text-related dialogue.*** Over time, there was more dialogue that occurred in the partner reading. One indicator of this was the increase in the number of words produced by younger partners. High levels of oral language production from young children has been linked to early reading success, making this a promising outcome (Hart & Risley, 1995; Whitehurst et al., 1994). In Table 6, I list the mean number of words younger students produced in sessions that occurred toward the early, middle, and later parts of the project.

**Table 7. Mean Number of Words Produced by Younger Partners in Early, Mid, and Later Dialogic Partner Reading Sessions\***

Student	Word Count—Early Sessions (2-3 sessions)	Word Count-Middle Sessions (2-3 sessions)	Word Count—Later Sessions (1-3 sessions)
Miguel	25 (2 sessions)	82 (3 sessions)	88 (2 sessions)
Daisy**	110 (3)	140(3)	161 (3)
Beatriz	38 (2)	81 (3)	160 (2)
Armando	8 (2)	16 (3)	24(3)
Liana	30 (2)	39 (2)	40 (1)

\*Pairs had varying numbers of sessions together, so to compare across the group, I clustered the sessions in three chronological categories. Each pair had 1-3 sessions represented in each.

\*\*In some sessions, Daisy often generated talk that was off-topic from the text. In the word count totals here, I only included her talk that was related to the reading.

All of the younger students produced more language in each consecutive temporal phase of the intervention. Daisy had the greatest amount of language production in each phase, but when examining her word count from session to session, there was a very irregular pattern. For example, in the final phase, she produced only 46 words in the seventh session, and 276 words in the ninth session. Other students had more steady and consistent gains. Most students had large jumps between the first, second, and third sessions, and either plateaued (i.e. Liana) or continued to climb (i.e. Beatriz). Armando produced the least number of words of the group, but his final session's word count of 30 was a notable improvement over the two words produced in the first session. An analysis of text-related talk across the sessions showed that there was only a slight increase in the number of stops or conversation breaks implemented in the sessions, but there was a dramatic increase in the amount of discussion during those stops.

***More even ratio of younger and older student talk.*** Not only was there more talk, there was a more equitable ratio of talk within the partner sets. Early on, the vast majority of text-related discussion was produced by older students, but over time, an increasing percentage of the

talk was generated by younger students. Below is a table showing the ratio of older/younger student talk across the whole group in partner sets' first, middle, and last sessions.

**Table 8. Ratio of Talk Between Older and Younger Students**

Student group	First session (post-baseline) Percentage of words spoken during session	Middle Session Percentage of words spoken during session	Last Session Percentage of words spoken during session
Older group*	86%	75%	68%
Younger group**	14%	25%	32%

\*Number of words spoken by older students/total number of words spoken in session's dialogue (does not include reading)

\*\*Number of words spoken by younger students/total number of words spoken in session's dialogue (does not include reading)

These numbers suggest that the discussions became more genuinely dialogic over time, with more equal participation between participants. The talk was still lop-sided at the end of the project, but this was largely due to the older students' more conscientious efforts to explain vocabulary words and plot. Another indication of more balanced dialogue was the increase in initiations from younger partners. This held true for all partner sets; younger students increasingly weighed in with questions or commentary (most often about illustrations), with the final two sessions having the most initiations by kindergartners in every partner set. In the baseline partner reading session, there was a total of one initiation from younger students across all pairs. In the final two sessions, there were 22 and 24, respectively. This possibly indicates a shift in what younger students understood partner reading to be. They increasingly demonstrated a conception of partner reading time as a context in which people talk about and exchange ideas about books.

***More sophisticated vocabulary in text discussions.*** While an increase in the *amount* of student talk was a promising indicator, there were also encouraging trends related to the *nature* of the talk that took place during the discussions. In examining transcripts over time, I found that there was a notable increase in the use of text vocabulary by the students—both older and younger—in their dialogues. Students seemed to take up language from books in their talk, including some sophisticated academic vocabulary words that were not often used in their day-to-day language. In the following excerpt of Teresa and Liana reading and discussing *My Name is Gabito/Me Llamo Gabito* (Brown, 2007), both girls use the six- and four-syllable words “imaginación” (imagination) and “imaginar” (to imagine) from the text in their exchange:

Teresa (reading text): Can you imagine? You can...Can you imagine a man with enormous wings falling from the sky?

Teresa: ¿Puedes imaginar un hombre gigante que se--con alas pueden volar en el cielo?  
[Can you imagine a gigantic man who...with wings that can fly in the sky?]

Liana: (nods)

Teresa: ¿Si? ¿Puedes usar tu imaginación? [Yes? You can use your imagination?]

Liana: Mi imaginación...yo puedo imaginar. [My imagination...I can imagine.]

This interaction, which occurred during Teresa and Liana’s third session together, is representative of the way participants integrated text language into their talk; it also exemplifies one of the several language dynamics represented in the study. In this excerpt, and in all of Teresa and Liana’s sessions, Teresa read in English (even with books that were bilingual), but chose to facilitate conversation mainly in Spanish. Teresa, recognizing that Spanish was her

partner's more dominant language, translated English text vocabulary when adding explanation, sharing thoughts, or asking questions, and Liana re-appropriated some of the translated words in her responses. This dynamic allowed Liana to access her full repertoire of language resources (Gutiérrez, 1999), including the broader and deeper corpus of vocabulary knowledge she had in Spanish, which enabled her to engage in conversations that were at a high level relative to other conversations in which I observed her engaging. Research suggests that participating in such conversations can benefit young readers' habits of mind and literacy development (e.g., Martinez-Rolon, 2003). This was also a promising trend for Liana's (and Armando's) English learning. Developing vocabulary in one's first language better enables an individual to eventually learn the same vocabulary in his/her second language; this is especially true for words like "imaginación" and "imaginar" which share cognates with their English counterparts (Cummins, 1994).

Even beyond the use of text vocabulary, there is evidence that the dialogic reading interactions afforded opportunities for students to have conversations that involved scholarly language. Mirroring common ELL instruction in schools, many of the words older students selected to highlight and teach from the text were content-specific, low-frequency words (e.g., plantation, quarrel). However, much of the academic language utilized by students in their exchanges included high-utility words—this was especially true of exchanges that were not explicitly focused on teaching and learning of vocabulary words. The following excerpt, in which both Beatriz and Helen use fairly sophisticated words, is a representative example of this. Beatriz, without being prompted, shares a keen insight in English about the main characters of *Lost and Found* (Jeffers, 2011), and Helen responds.

Helen (reading text): They rowed south for many days...and many nights. There was lots of time for stories and the penguin listened to every one, so the boy would always tell another one.

Helen: So they're there (points to illustration) and then they go over there (points).

Beatriz: They were patient? They went day and night?

Helen: Ya. *Ya!* That's a good...observation.

Beatriz: Hmm... (smiles)

This exchange illustrates how dialogic reading provided a forum for students to hear and use (and in turn, perhaps, develop) more academic vocabulary. In this case, Beatriz used the word “patient” and Helen used “observation;” neither of these words was found directly in the text, but they represent the kinds of higher-level words that were utilized in students’ dialogues around the text. These book conversations were contexts in which the use of academic language, whether in English or Spanish, was common—a norm. Before the intervention, I did not observe many contexts beyond homework time in which students regularly used academic vocabulary in their talk with one another. This finding reaffirms previous research on how dialogic reading can create opportunities for strategic language development. Sometimes these types of language patterns, which are not always authentic or typical in other contexts, tend to “work” in the context of book reading (Sénéchal & Young, 2008).

The partner reading and interview transcripts showed a general overall increase in students’ attention to and sensitivity to language. Most intermediate-grade students said they read the books with an eye focused on words that could be taught and learned from the text. For

example, Araceli said, “When I read, I tried to find hard words or words that were kind of like different or new maybe.” Metalinguistic reflections like Araceli’s were commonly shared during individual and group post-reading reflections.

***Enhanced engagement.*** Both older and younger student groups demonstrated signs of increased behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement (Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Video analysis showed that older and younger students spent more time on task, a measure of behavioral engagement. For example, there were fewer instances of students looking around or having side conversations; they spent more time looking at the book and their partners, and more time in discussion about the books. The most dramatic example of change was Liana. In early observations and video data, she was observed to be off task for extended periods of time; this pattern changed very early in the project. By the second partner reading session, there was only one brief instance of observed off-task behavior from her, and there was never more than one instance of this in each of the remainder of the sessions.

The increase in dialogue and the enhanced quality of the dialogue (described previously in subsections on quantity and ratio of talk and enhanced vocabulary use) indicated improved cognitive engagement for both older and younger groups. Students also demonstrated signs of increased emotional engagement. For example, over time, there were more instances in which older and younger students expressed interest in books through some sort of utterance or explicit emotional response, such as laughter or exclamations (i.e. “Whoa!” “Wow!” “Oh no!”). This pattern held for all five pairs. Additional findings about students’ perspectives in the personal plane chapter (Chapter 6) highlight further evidence of enhanced emotional engagement.

Daisy represented an exception to some of the engagement trends. She and Mariana had a mercurial relationship, which seemed to be rooted in their personal histories. Mariana was the best friend of Daisy's older sister, and Daisy shared that she felt the older girls left her and Miguel (Mariana's brother) out when playing at home. Daisy seemed very fascinated with Mariana, and Gloria thought that their partnership would be a good opportunity for the two of them to have a shared experience with only one another, apart from their siblings. Although Daisy demonstrated relatively high levels of behavioral, intellectual, and emotional engagement during the last two consecutive sessions, looking across the corpus of partner reading data, her engagement was fairly inconsistent from session to session. At times she seemed to intentionally stray from the task to frustrate Mariana (e.g., saying, "I want to eat some chips")—perhaps to get her attention, to assert some kind of control, or to establish herself as someone with agency. Sometimes she sang, looked away, or changed the subject; but her most common tactic was to respond to Mariana's prompts in satirical ways. For example:

Mariana: (pointing to illustration) Look at all the people. Look at what they're doing.  
What do you think they're doing?

Daisy: (using "babytalk") They're doing all of Mariana's circus moves.

This behavior was most common in sessions when Mariana seemed to approach dialogic reading more like a context for quizzing rather than for fostering conversation. It is interesting to note that Daisy's attempts to tease Mariana in this way actually required fairly sophisticated thinking and careful attention to the story; these are indicators of cognitive engagement. While a substantial amount of Daisy's talk was tangential and off-topic, there is evidence that, despite the

social challenges and inconsistency, the two girls did generate a considerable volume of discussion related to the books.

Karina also differed from the rest of the intermediate-grade group in engagement patterns. She seemed resistant to utilizing dialogic reading strategies in certain ways, and demonstrated the lowest level of implementation of all older participants. Transcripts from early sessions suggest that her partner, Armando, was attentive but not forthcoming with responses to her prompts, which perhaps resulted in Karina feeling like she could not be successful in her dialogic reading efforts. This arguably detracted from her subsequent efforts. (Note: I, myself, had a difficult time engaging Armando in discussion.) She demonstrated more indicators of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement toward the very end of the intervention and after the intervention when she had more choice regarding book and partner selection. Like Daisy, it appeared as if more agency (less prescription from my end) and perhaps more practice motivated Karina to implement dialogic reading.

**What mattered?** I have presented trends from partner reading sessions that suggest the intervention had an overall positive impact on students' participation in dialogic reading. Namely, the sessions were increasingly characterized by more talk, more even dialogue, higher quality of dialogue (including the use of more complex vocabulary), and enhanced engagement for both older and younger students. I now examine factors that contributed to these promising trends. As mentioned, older students responded favorably to sustained explicit instruction and practice opportunities with dialogic reading strategies, and this arguably impacted their overall capacity to facilitate discussions. In my analysis, I searched for other specific factors that may have fostered the trends mentioned above. To this end, I closely examined data from 29 sessions, which were divided into three categories. For each pair, I identified two transcripts (and

accompanying videos) in which the noted trends<sup>8</sup> were most prevalent, two in which the trends were least prevalent, and two that were in the middle. For the purposes of this analysis, I labeled the categories “productive,” “somewhat productive,” and “least productive.” (Because of absences, Teresa and Liana had only five sessions together; I identified only one session as “least productive” for their case.) I looked for common features across the more productive sessions, and compared them to features noted in the less productive sessions. In so doing, I tried to identify potential correlative features contributing to high levels of dialogue and engagement at the session level. I list and describe the features here.

***Question clusters.*** One feature that seemed to produce a greater amount and higher quality of talk was the inclusion of numerous open-ended questions. In looking at some of the most productive discussions, I noticed that these open-ended questions were often paired with other questions aimed at eliciting further response and/or deeper thinking. In some cases, the question clusters involved a series of open-ended questions. Sometimes the intermediate-grade students asked closed questions first, and followed with an open-ended question, which often produced higher quantities of talk. In other instances, students first asked open-ended questions, then, if their partners had difficulty responding, they followed with a more narrow or concrete question that their partners could engage with more confidence or facility. Armando and Liana in particular seemed to respond more readily to the latter types of questions. In the following excerpt, Teresa’s set of three questions (one open followed by two closed) led to more talk and also led to Liana once again picking up on and re-appropriating Teresa’s language.

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<sup>8</sup> I identified sessions in which at least three of the four positive trends (more talk, more even talk, more sophisticated language use, higher levels of engagement) were prevalent.

Teresa (reading text): Pelé's team won! The Brazilians were the world champions of soccer for the first time! Listening on the radio at home, Pelé's father cried—but this time because he was so happy.

Teresa: ¿Porqué su papá estaba llorando? [Why was his dad crying?]

Liana: Porque está... [Because he is...]

Teresa: ¿Su papá está triste? ¿O él está llorando porque hubieron ganado? [Is his dad sad? Or was he crying because they had won?]

Liana: Está feliz porque ellos hubieron ganado. [He is happy because they had won.]

Teresa: Sí! [Yes!]

Teresa's cluster of questions enabled Liana to produce more text-related language. Interestingly, she echoed Teresa's fairly sophisticated past-perfect verb form (they had won). The question clusters did not only support younger students' learning opportunities; this practice seemed to benefit older students, as well. Formulating a line of questioning aimed at getting to the heart of the meaning of story plot, theme, or vocabulary requires a keen attentiveness. The work of listening to younger students' talk and responding strategically in ways that guide and support is a sophisticated task, and entails deep comprehension and critical thinking. This reaffirms Palincsar and Brown's (1984) findings showing that arrangements requiring students to ask questions can be both a comprehension-fostering and comprehension-monitoring activity.

Very few of the sessions that lacked engaging dialogue had these types of clusters. For example, in an early session, Araceli intended to guide Miguel to acknowledge that the three

sisters' fighting in *Tiff, Taff, and Lulu* (2004) led to nothing but trouble, but her closed questioning did not lead Miguel to this understanding, nor did it elicit much talk from him:

Araceli: Um—do you think they had fun when they were fighting?

Miguel: Ya.

Araceli: They did?

Miguel: Ya.

Araceli: Ok.

In this exchange, Miguel is left with a misunderstanding about the text, there is little dialogue, and arguably limited cognitive (and perhaps emotional) engagement evidenced. This was a common result when clusters of open or open mixed with closed questions were not employed.

***Scaffolding.*** The clustering of questions relates closely with a second trend that was evident in particularly productive sessions: intermediate-grade students became increasingly proficient at scaffolding comprehension and word learning for their younger partners. There were several techniques students strategically used in their scaffolding efforts. The three most common scaffolding patterns involved: (1) strategic use of English and Spanish, (2) persistence and follow-up, and (3) revisiting/reading text to put a question or prompt in context. Strategically selecting language was something that most La Unidad students did every day across the day; students implemented this as a scaffold in partner reading throughout the entire project. The other two patterns were included on all four of the weekly goal bookmarks, and were implemented by students as early as the third session.

***Attention to language.*** Perhaps the most obvious scaffolding “move” was the strategic use of English and Spanish. Beginning the first session, the intermediate-grade students who

were bilingual led discussions in whatever they perceived to be their partners' preferred language, or the language they thought their partners spoke more proficiently. Interview data indicate that they did this to support the younger students' understanding and engagement. In Karina and Teresa's cases, that meant that their discussion was mostly in Spanish; this was a notable difference from before the intervention, when they hardly ever spoke Spanish, and never during reading time. In interviews, students explained their language choices. Teresa said,

(I used) mostly Spanish because she (Liana) can understand it better so it was easier for her. And I used both (English and Spanish) because sometimes I couldn't find something out in Spanish so I would say it in English and she would understand it better like that so I would go back and forth in English and Spanish and she would understand more.

Araceli, who was bilingual and paired with an English-dominant student, explained,

Ya, I always talked and read in English because Miguel doesn't know a lot of Spanish, I think, so English was better for us. He did ask me about some Spanish words and the story and I told him what they meant...like he asked me what 'vida' meant.

Not only does this excerpt show Araceli's intentional linguistic decisions based on her partner's needs, it also hints at the potential this kind of partner reading arrangement holds for Spanish language development opportunities.

In contrast, Helen and Beatriz's partnership involved intentional English apprenticeship. Although Helen did not have the linguistic skills to facilitate a conversation in Spanish, she nonetheless recognized Beatriz's language strengths in Spanish, and adapted her own language scaffolding accordingly. Helen explained,

So I would give her (Beatriz) hints about words and stuff because I knew she was better at Spanish...I would give her hints and I tried to help her figure out new English words. So if I, like, if I had an only-English partner, I wouldn't have given her so many hints I think because maybe she would have known more about the English word as an English speaker. But because she (Beatriz) wasn't (an only-English speaker), I think it was better...I think it was a fun time.

This is the kind of language learning experience explored by Guadalupe Valdés (2010). Valdés' large-scale investigation of young emerging bilinguals engaging in conversation and educational play with proficient English speakers after school resulted in impressive growth in language development and early second language literacy (2010). This type of linguistic apprenticeship also seemed to offer benefits for Helen. In addition to it being "a fun time," it required thoughtful attention to language, a deep understanding of word meanings and key story ideas, and creative and critical thinking about ways to convey those meanings and ideas (Beck, Perfetti, McKeown, 1982; Topping & Bryce, 2004).

*Persistence and follow-up.* Over time, students exhibited an impressive display of persistence in their facilitation. The aforementioned question clusters, and other concerted efforts to follow up on younger students' misunderstandings or to build on their ideas, were indicators of this persistence. In the beginning of the project, when partners replied to an initial question with "I don't know," or another short or one-word answer, the older students typically moved on without further pause or discussion. Over time, however, all of the older students were much more persistent with their attempts to make sure their partners were understanding the story and the highlighted vocabulary. Sometimes this involved asking follow-up questions (as described in the sub-section on question clusters) and offering further explanations or comments that clarified

story events or language. In the excerpt below, Mariana asked an open-ended question about the book *Pelé, King of Soccer* (Brown, 2008); her question engaged a key theme in the story—Pelé’s success in spite of his humble beginnings, or “overcoming adversity.” Building on Daisy’s one-word response, she asks another open-ended question—a *why* question—that elicits a thoughtful response from Daisy.

Mariana (reading text): Pelé and his friends started their own soccer team. When the other teams saw that Pelé and his teammates couldn’t afford shoes, they nicknamed them the “Barefoot Team.” But the Barefoot Team kept winning!

Mariana: What do you think the other kids thought—like kids with soccer shoes when the barefoot kids beated them?

Daisy: Weird.

Mariana: I think so, too. Why would it be weird?

Daisy: Because they don’t have shoes and they were so poor they don’t have shoes, so it doesn’t seem like they would be better.

This example highlights how follow-up questions prompted a much longer response from younger students (contributing to the trends of more talk, greater engagement, and perhaps more sophisticated language use). In this case, Daisy’s response consisted of 28 words compared to her initial one-word response. Daisy’s response also indicated a relatively deep understanding of a critical text idea: Pelé succeeded beyond people’s expectations of a boy with his background. All 10 of the transcripts in the “productive” category of this analysis had evidence of older

students' efforts to persist; Mariana utilized "why" questions more frequently than her peers, which seemed to be especially effective for building talk and understanding.

Students' persistence was particularly evident in their efforts to scaffold word learning. As mentioned, Karina's implementation of dialogic reading was modest throughout most of the project; however, while partner reading with both Armando and Liana in the last recorded session, she demonstrated concerted attempts to highlight and discuss words. In the excerpt below, Karina emphatically tries to teach Armando and Liana a word of interest in a *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* book (Kinney, 2009).

Karina: (reading text) But each of these guys have their own issues. Tyson is nice enough and we like the same video games and all, but he pulls his pants all the way down when he goes to the urinal. And I don't know if I can ever get past that.

Karina: Okay...what do you guys think a urinal (pronounced "ur-eye-nal" throughout) is? (3 seconds) ¿Qué piensan es? Un urinal. [What do you think it is? A urinal.]

Armando: Un urinal ("ur-eye-nal")? [A urinal?]

Karina: ¿Qué piensan significa? (3 seconds) [What do you think it means?]

Liana: Es cuando estás en el baño. [It is when you are in the bathroom.]

Karina: Sí, pero el baño—inside—al dentro del baño es un urinal. [Yes, but the bathroom—inside—inside of the bathroom is a urinal.]

Armando: (Pointing to illustration) [unintelligible]

Liana: (Pointing to illustration) It says 'knock knock.'

Karina: Un urinal es como un baño por hombres. Que sacas tu... [A urinal is like a bathroom for men...you pull...]

Liana: Eeewwwwwww! (giggles)

Karina: Yes, es así. No...aveces no tienes que sit on the toilet. A veces son... es como...es como un caja, verdad? Es como un caja. [Yes, it's like that. No, sometimes you don't have to sit on the toilet. Sometimes they are...it's like...it's like a box, right? It's like a box.]

(Karina, Liana, and Armando nod and giggle)

Karina: ¿Es como una regadera? ¿Sabe lo que tiene las regaderas—aquí abajo hay un círculo con puntitos? Y todo el agua se baja por allá...bueno, como cuando tu pipi se va por esos hoyoutos. [It's like a showerhead? You know you have those showerheads—here on the bottom there is a circle with little dots? (gestures with hands) Well, like when you pee it goes down those little holes.]

Liana: Ahh. (nods)

Armando: Aquí es el urinal. (points to illustration) ¿Y qué pasa al niño? [Here is the urinal. And what happens to the boy?]

(Karina continues reading.)

Karina's detailed explanation in English and Spanish illustrates her determination in making sure her partners understood the word 'urinal.' In this case, the teaching and learning of the focus word was exclusively focused on conveying the definition. Karina was persistent in her scaffolding, but she did not link the discussion of the word directly to the plot or key meanings in

the story. However, there were numerous instances of students making such links in the most productive sessions; this kind of scaffolding is the next trend I explicate.

*Revisiting/rereading text to put question in context.* Another approach used by the intermediate-grade group to scaffold comprehension and word learning was strategic revisiting and rereading of text. Students did this to support their partners' understanding by emphasizing important plot points or themes, or to put a question or comment in context. Four of the five older students (all but Karina) utilized this scaffolding technique regularly by the end of the project, with Helen using it most frequently. In the following excerpt from a partner reading session with the book *Lost and Found* (Jeffers, 2011), Helen tried to teach Beatriz the word "discovered." She initially re-read the sentence in which the word is found, and then after Beatriz's response, she provided more scaffolding by explaining the illustration and again providing context by saying the word in a sentence.

Helen: Ok so it says... what do you think 'discovered' means? It says, 'the next morning he *discovered* that penguins came from the South Pole'...So what do you think 'discovered' means?

Beatriz: Um, he don't know where he come from.

Helen: Or like if you look in this picture, it's like, what is he trying to do? It says "where penguins come from." He *discovered* where they came from...so what do you think that means?

Beatriz: That now he knows something now.

Helen: *Ya!* (excitedly) So he figured it out, right? *Ya!*

None of the transcripts in the “least productive” category included this type of scaffolding. There was almost no evidence of contextualization efforts in students’ attempts to teach words in the least productive sessions. For example, after reading an entire page of text in *My Name is Gabito/Me Llamo Gabito* (Brown, 2007), Teresa asked Liana, “Crees que significa ‘gliding’?” [What do you think ‘gliding’ means?] Not surprisingly, without support, Liana could not respond to this type of question, which limited her opportunity to discuss and undermined her engagement in the process. She experienced more success with talking about vocabulary words in later sessions when Teresa went back to re-read words in context.

Again, this type of scaffolding seemed to benefit younger students as well as older students. Older students experienced rich opportunities to practice drawing on their own and their partners’ background knowledge and utilizing context clues to thinking about words. As they practiced these important reading strategies, they also modeled them for their partners.

***Wait time.*** There was a conspicuous increase in the time older students made available for their partners to respond. When students asked a question or shared a comment toward the beginning of the project, they rarely waited longer than a second or two for a response from their partners before talking or resuming the reading again. In later sessions, I noted that all of the older students waited longer.

The longest of these pauses was seven seconds; Araceli waited as Miguel looked pensively into the air saying “umm...” until he eventually replied to her question with a complete sentence of 16 words. This example illustrates the role wait time played in the increase of younger students’ language production (as measured by word count), as well as the ratio of older versus younger student talk. Based on patterns from the first sessions, it is likely that Araceli would have moved on when Miguel did not respond immediately had this been earlier in

the project. This would have resulted in a 6:0 older/younger word count ratio for that exchange, rather than the 6:16 ratio that actually emerged. Transcripts showed that Helen, Mariana, and Teresa waited at least five seconds on more than one occasion and Karina waited up to four seconds.

**Affirmation.** Another characteristic of productive dialogic reading sessions was a high number of affirmations on the part of older students. That is, older students more frequently praised younger partners for their contributions, gave encouragement, and/or expressed agreement with the insights they shared; there were very few affirmations in the least productive sessions. In the data excerpts already included throughout this chapter, there are four clear examples of this:

- Teresa exclaimed “Sí!” after Liana’s accurate response.
- Mariana replied, “I think so, too!” and nodded in agreement with Daisy’s ideas.
- Upon hearing Beatriz’s definition of the word *discovered*, Helen excitedly said, “Ya! So he figured it out, right? Ya!”
- Helen also praised Beatriz for a self-initiated insight she shared, saying “Ya! That’s a good observation!”

It is possible that there were more affirmations in successful sessions simply *because* they were more successful; younger students’ more abundant and relevant responses would mean more reasons for praise from their older counterparts. There is some evidence, however, that the affirmations also generated further engagement and talk from younger students. For example, video data showed younger students’ demonstrate visibly positive emotional responses (e.g.,

smiles, moving closer to partner, enthusiastic nods) upon receiving affirmations from their older partners. These responses signified enhanced emotional engagement.

*Younger partners' familiarity with text.* Finally, another factor that seemed to influence dialogic productivity and engagement had to do with the younger partners' familiarity with the text. When kindergarteners had already read or heard a story, in most cases, their responses were more prolific and they showed increased engagement and excitement. Perhaps they felt more motivated to engage because they "knew the answers" or had enough background to proceed with more confidence. This seemed to be the case with Daisy, who typically avoided or resisted Mariana's prediction questions about unfamiliar books, but showed much greater willingness and engagement when sharing predictions she knew to be "right."

Text familiarity seems to have been a factor in some students' vocabulary learning opportunities, as well. Across the sessions, Beatriz showed tremendous effort in trying to engage Helen's many questions about vocabulary words. The questions usually prompted Beatriz to define words (e.g., "What do you think 'gliding' means?"), and despite Helen's impressive attempts to scaffold, Beatriz had mixed success in defining these words accurately across the sessions. This is understandable: we know from research that even when someone understands a word when he/she encounters it in text or talk, it can be a challenge to define it (Nagy & Scott, 2004). This is especially true in one's second language (Gersten & Baker, 2000). In the sessions in which Beatriz was already familiar with the book, she seemed to have greater success in accurately defining the words Helen highlighted. Perhaps this was because Beatriz had more background knowledge to bring to the text. She arguably had more context around the words of interest both at the story and sentence levels. Further, because she did not need to do as much

cognitive work to follow and understand the already-familiar stories, more of her cognitive resources were freed her up to think about particular words.

Apart from the baseline session, there were no instances of students reading familiar texts early on in the intervention. In some ways, this makes it difficult to parse out the role of text familiarity from the other factors that had shifted in later sessions—especially students' increased proficiency and experience with dialogic reading. However, compared to other sessions that also took place later in the project, those that were centered around a book already familiar to the younger student were characterized by: more visible excitement and enjoyment from the kindergarteners, quicker and more eager responses (e.g., less time elapsed before they weighed in), and more talk initiated by younger students.

Aside from text familiarity, I did not notice any clear group trends that linked particular texts to quantity and quality of talk. There was more talk in later sessions, but there is no evidence that it was exclusively or even mainly due to the books (e.g., topic, illustrations) per se. Students were improving at facilitating dialogue over time, so for the most part, books that were read later in the project elicited the most and highest-quality discussions.<sup>9</sup> I did not see any clear trends related to genre. For example, the biographies did not fair better or worse than fictional stories about animals across the group. This is not to say that students did not enjoy some books more than others. In interviews, students asserted that the books and their interest levels made a difference for their partners' and their own engagement with the texts, and subsequently the conversations. So while there were likely differences from text to text with individual students, I

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<sup>9</sup> Because of absences, several students ended up reading books toward the end of the project that the others had read earlier on; their dialogic success with those books indicated that enhanced quantity and quality of book dialogue and engagement in such dialogue, had more to do with the facilitators' improving skills than particular books.

did not identify any clear patterns linking certain books with enhanced dialogue at the group level.

**Older students' reflections.** Corresponding with the changes in dialogic reading participation over time, there was also noteworthy development in students' reflections about their participation and learning. Some of the major trends for older students' reflection involved: a correlative relationship between individuals' dialogic reading facilitation improvement and their ability to reflect about the partner sessions; a shift in students' conceptions of their own locus of control or influence in dialogic reading success; an increase in students' self-efficacy; and evidence of students' learning from one another's shared reflections.

***Relationship between facilitation and reflection.*** The students who showed the greatest and earliest improvement in their dialogic reading facilitation (i.e. utilizing question clusters, effective scaffolding, wait time, etc.) were students who were the most reflective about their facilitation in post-reading debriefing. When comparing the amount and quality of dialogue in initial sessions to later ones, Araceli and Helen seemed to show the greatest improvement as facilitators. Interestingly, Araceli struggled more than any of the older students at the start of the project, but improved quite quickly, and sustained her proficiency. Relative to the group, Araceli and Helen were also best able to articulate the strengths and limitations of their dialogic reading efforts in both individual and group post-reading reflections early on. This set them up to readily set goals for themselves for subsequent sessions; in most cases, they attained the goals they set.

Much of their reflection and goal setting was guided by the weekly goal bookmarks. For example, after the second session, Araceli noted that Miguel frequently responded to her questions with one-word responses, and so she decided she would focus on asking follow-up

questions. The transcript of her third session denotes concerted attempts to do this, which had a successful outcome: Miguel jumped from producing 33 words in session two to 85 words in session three. Drawing on the goal bookmark items as guidelines, Helen said that she did not think she waited long enough for Beatriz to weigh in on the conversation. “I need to be, like, more patient when I’m waiting for her,” she asserted after the third session. Transcripts from following sessions indicated that Helen did in fact improve in this way, which seemed to promote more opportunities for dialogue. Some of their reflections went beyond the items listed on the goal bookmarks. For example, Helen thought she was asking Beatriz about too many vocabulary words and was thus overwhelming her (and perhaps boring her, as well). Araceli insightfully identified another work area:

Sometimes I, like, ask him (Miguel) about a vocabulary word and I can tell he doesn’t really get it, but I don’t really know what the word means either, and so I kind of stop talking about it and keep reading. So I guess one thing I want to try to do is, like, maybe learn more about the words before I read with him so I do better at that.

These examples indicate considerable investment from Helen and Araceli; in detailing their goals and plans, they showed the will and the skill to improve. The other older students also demonstrated insightful reflection and investment, but these two seemed to exhibit this most explicitly and consistently.

More than likely, there was a bidirectional relationship at play. Araceli and Helen’s capacity to reflect improved their skill in eliciting quality “book talk,” *and vice versa*; that is, their partners’ high level of dialogic participation actually enhanced the two girls’ capacity to reflect. It is important to note that both Araceli and Helen were paired with kindergarten students

who were eager to engage. Perhaps their partners' eagerness was in part due to the older girls' skill in engaging them, but was also likely due to Miguel and Beatriz's disposition and willingness to engage in this way. This dynamic arguably influenced Araceli and Helen's facilitation success as well as their competence in reflecting; it may have also influenced their motivation and willingness to invest in improving the dialogic process. That their attempts to elicit more talk from their partners were successful early on "sold" them on their influential role in leading dialogue. They could see their partners responding to their efforts, which enabled them to think about themselves as facilitators whose dialogic moves could improve the reading experience.

*Locus of control.* Several students had a difficult time identifying and/or articulating the strengths and limitations of their efforts, which often seemed to be related to how they were thinking about locus of control (i.e. who/what had influence)—especially early in the project. I noticed a shift in the way older students talked (and perhaps thought) about locus of control over time. Initially, it was common for students to attribute a session's success or failure to the behavior or skills of the kindergarten partners. For example, on a number of occasions, Karina averred, "It (the conversation) wasn't good because he (Armando) won't say anything," and Mariana complained, "Our book talk wasn't good because Daisy is always trying to be goofy." Accordingly, students with this mindset struggled to identify ways that they could actively improve the quality of the book talks. Over time—perhaps because of modeling, the weekly bookmarks, partners' growing accustomed to the expectations, or regular opportunities to hear fellow peers reflecting on changes and goals—there were much fewer examples of this type of external attributing.

Reflection challenges were not only due to external locus of control beliefs, however. For example, many of Mariana's reflections suggested that she thought herself responsible for the success or failure of the dialogic reading, but simply did not have the necessary strategies or skills needed to fully engage Daisy. Mariana's facilitation produced the most talk throughout the project, but an analysis of partner reading transcripts and videos indicated uneven efficacy from session to session. She usually implemented many of the suggested dialogic "moves," but even when she thought things did not go well in her sessions with Daisy, she was stumped when it came to reflecting on what could be done differently. Perhaps this is because the emphasis in my instruction was on the general strategies and mechanics of dialogic reading, and less on the social-relational nuances, which was the area in which Mariana needed the most support.

***Self-efficacy.*** All of the older students thought that they improved in facilitating dialogic reading over the course of the project. Araceli and Helen reported to have improved "a lot" and Mariana, Karina, and Teresa said they showed "some" improvement. These self-reports parallel findings from my analysis of transcripts from the dialogic reading sessions. In describing their improved efficacy in dialogic reading facilitation, they discussed particular discussion moves and engagement techniques they came to utilize more effectively. In some cases, the students referenced their younger partners' improvement as an indicator of their own proficiency and improvement, again showing the perception that their facilitation efforts contributed to younger partners' improved skills as well as a sense of responsibility for their partners' learning. All students grew in self-efficacy related to social skills and dispositions, and were particularly proud of their ability to show patience.

All five students identified intentional changes they made over the course of the project; they discussed these as signifiers of their own improvement. (In my analysis I noted these as

indicators of increased self-efficacy.) For example, Araceli said that her “book talk” improved because she came to read more carefully—both in her preparation, and during her oral reading with Miguel. She said, “When I read the books, like when I read them the day before and when I was reading them to Miguel, I was thinking about what the book had that Miguel could learn about.” Referring to the actual reading sessions, Araceli explained, “I got better at reading more carefully, because I used to read like really fast...and I read more clearly for him (Miguel) because sometimes some people don’t understand me when I read too fast.” This example is representative of the nature of the changes identified by the students (i.e. reading clearly), but it is a particularly interesting example in terms of the metacognitive thinking it reveals. Specifically, Araceli’s quote highlights the ways in which the dialogic reading context, and the purposes for reading that the dialogic reading context engendered, created opportunities for students to develop and practice important reading skills (i.e. attending to meaning and prosody). This illustrates—and reaffirms—potential benefits this kind of activity can afford for comprehension monitoring and fluency development (see also Chapter 6).

Some older students also discussed their self-efficacy in terms of what their partners were able to do, although this was less common. One of the most striking examples of this was Helen’s description of Beatriz’s growth. She said,

I think I helped her (Beatriz) learn a lot of different and new words in English. And I think that was good. And she learned how to read which was amazing. When I heard her read at the beginning, she wasn’t very good, and when I heard her at the end, she was a really good reader, and I think that was partly because we had these times together. And it got her into when she was reading independently, like when we were reading silently

she would try to—it was funny and cute—when she was reading with a friend, she would like ask her friend questions and that would get them talking about the book.

All of the older students' acknowledged their part in their partners' improvement at least once. For instance, Teresa noted Liana's improved focus during reading time, and Araceli discussed Miguel's overcoming his worries about being right/wrong with his responses. "He got better at not caring if he was right or wrong, but he got better at just talking about, just saying what he thought because...after...after I told him not to worry."

***Learning from peers.*** There is evidence that the shared debriefing and planning sessions afforded opportunities for students to think together and share ideas. In some cases, hearing peers' reflections seemed to prompt less prolific "reflectors" to weigh insights that they had not considered; in this way, students served as models for one another (Vygotsky, 1978). For example, in one of the final sessions, Karina, who had been relatively reticent with her reflections, shared: "I think I got a little better at being patient. Sometimes he (Armando) would be thinking for like five minutes and he wouldn't answer, and it was really hard to wait, but then he usually said something." She had heard all four of her peers reflect on their attempts to be patient over the five weeks; perhaps Karina was picking up on these previously articulated reflections. There were other instances of students revoicing ideas that were previously mentioned by more outwardly reflective peers. For example, early on, Helen said that Beatriz responded well when Helen "got her to read some of the words" along with her. This was never a suggestion on the goal bookmarks, yet two other students mentioned it later as a strategy they used during partner reading. This may suggest they were reappropriating an idea that was shared by a peer.

Older students' participation in reflection was an important aspect of interpersonal activity in this study. Their reflections influenced the ways in which they participated in partner reading with their younger counterparts. Further, older students' reflections, many of which were shared in community, seemed to afford opportunities for peers to learn from one another. The context positioned students who were in some ways more capable as "more knowledgeable others," guiding and supporting their peers to advance within their respective zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

### **Interpersonal Activity After Intervention**

I was able to observe four of the five older students (all but Teresa) and all five younger students in the three weeks after the intervention (six observations, 12 hours total). Once again, I focused on students' participation during regularly scheduled reading time at La Unidad in my observations (six observations, 20-30 minutes each).

Students switched reading partners at the end of the intervention. Because the partner assignments had lasted longer than usual due to the intervention (typically they would meet once per week for a month, but they met twice per week for over five weeks), Gloria decided to allow students to choose their own reading partners rather than assigning them. So while some of the students opted to partner with friends who were of a similar age, I still had the opportunity to observe older and younger children engaged in partner reading together. I identified differences in participation patterns compared to those captured in field notes before the intervention. Some of the patterns<sup>10</sup> indicated take up of the dialogic reading strategies promoted in the intervention. For example, one notable theme was that students frequently talked to one another about books.

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<sup>10</sup> Patterns/themes represent types of interactions that I saw recurring several (or many) times (common to individuals or across the group) in field notes.

With a few exceptions, there was less talk than there was during the intervention, but substantially more than what occurred in pre-intervention observations.

I observed Mariana, Helen, and Karina reading with younger partners after the intervention. In one instance, Mariana read to Miguel. He read along with her when he could, and Mariana asked him questions as they went. At one point, Miguel's attention seemed to wander, and Mariana said, "Miguel, pay attention to this. Why do you think the brother didn't want to go?" This was one of six observed instances in which older students attempted to redirect the attention or behavior of their partners when they strayed off task. It seemed as if they had assumed a greater sense of responsibility or interest in their partners' attentiveness to the book they were reading. This was a participation pattern that was not apparent in observations during reading time before the intervention. In early field notes, younger students looked distracted or "zoned out" more often, and when they did lose focus, there were no examples in the field notes of older students redirecting or re-engaging their partners. Readers simply kept reading.

There was evidence that study participants were applying dialogic reading strategies with students who were not part of the project. Helen read several times with Jacinta, a 2<sup>nd</sup>-grade student, and they both took turns reading and asking questions in the two sessions I observed. This kind of book talk also became more common among younger students. To Helen's delight, Beatriz began appropriating dialogic reading with other children during the intervention (on independent reading days or during free time), and continued to do so in the weeks after. For example, while reading *You're My Honey, Funny Bunny* (Doherty, 2006), Beatriz stopped to ask Liana and another Spanish-dominant 1<sup>st</sup>-grade student "What happened to the bunny? ¿Qué pasó al conejito?" The other student, following Liana's lead, began to join in. Liana's experience with

dialogic reading allowed her to readily participate in the bilingual conversations initiated by Beatriz.

One of the most surprising and striking findings was that Karina, who had the lowest level of implementation throughout the project, was one of the most prolific dialogic reading implementers after the intervention. In one example, Karina read the predictable book *Are We There Yet, Daddy?* (Walters, 1999) to Liana, and enthusiastically engaged her in talk throughout. The book had numerous questions built in to the text (e.g. “How much farther do we have to go?”), and Karina paused after each of these to give Liana an opportunity to respond. Below is an excerpt from Karina’s interview in which she reflected on this.

Karina: Ya, I did it (dialogic reading) a lot more with Liana...

KB: Why do you think that is?

Karina: I don’t know...I guess it’s because Liana and I know each other and go to the same school, and I think she’s probably more mature than Armando...she understood everything more.

KB: Were there any other reasons why you decided to lead more book talk than you did during the project?

Karina: Well, I guess this time I like didn’t *have* to do it. I just wanted to do it. It’s like at school, when I’m supposed to do things I never do it.

KB: Why is that, do you think?

Karina. I don’t know. That’s what I always ask myself all the time.

Although Karina is an outlier in this sample in some ways, her trajectory of participation illuminates critical factors in a project like this: agency and choice, as well as relationships between the student partners, impacted her (and arguably others') motivation and capacity to engage in dialogic reading. Her insights also shed light on her experiences as a student with a personality disorder, including her difficulties with teacher-prescribed activities.

The dialogic patterns I observed during partner reading between young partners and cross-age partners were not evident in the partner reading among older students. For example, when Araceli paired up with a 4<sup>th</sup>-grade friend, Lola (who also occasionally joined in the intervention project during the few times she was present), for partner reading, they simply took turns reading. This was true of Mariana and Laura's (also 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) partner reading, as well. In a couple of instances, Mariana voiced questions and insights aloud, but it did not lead to dialogue.

In one of my six observations of reading time, I documented Jacinta's (2<sup>nd</sup> grade-student) reading to the whole group of La Unidad children. She stopped twice during the reading of *Abiyoyo* (Seeger, 1986) to ask questions from the group, and older and younger La Unidad students, those who had participated in the intervention and those who had not, responded. Perhaps Jacinta had picked up on this kind of prompting from her reading time with Helen, and perhaps also from Araceli's example. Araceli had facilitated discussion when she read *Lost and Found* (Jeffers, 2011) to the whole group during the intervention. (I recorded and transcribed this reading.) At first hesitant, Araceli proceeded to stop five times to ask questions, and found that many students were eager to engage her prompts. She also led a short discussion after the book, which took the place of the beach ball activity typically directed by the teachers. "Everyone wanted to answer my questions!" she enthusiastically announced afterwards when telling the older students and me about her experience. Jacinta's was the only whole group read aloud I

observed after the intervention, so based on my field notes alone, I cannot identify this as a pattern. However, Gloria reported in an interview that other students had taken up some dialogic strategies in whole group reading, as well. (I discuss this and other indicators of institutional change in Chapter 7.)

## **Summary**

An examination of the partner reading transcripts, videos, and reflections collected during the intervention, and a comparison of field notes collected before and after the intervention, indicated that there were some notable changes in La Unidad students' participation patterns that seemed to be influenced by the dialogic reading intervention. Across the group, there was: an increase over time in the quantity and quality of student dialogue around book reading; a more even ratio of younger and older student talk; enhanced sensitivity to language and an increase in students' use of more sophisticated language; and heightened engagement for both older and younger students. These trends held true for all five pairs, but some of the trends were more pronounced in certain pairs, and there was variation in the trajectory of the five pairs

An analysis of sessions in which these promising trends were prevalent, somewhat prevalent, and not outcomes seemed to be dependent on—or at least related to—a number of factors. One factor was the use of question clusters, and in particular, lines of questioning that fostered talk and thinking with open-ended prompts. Another major factor was scaffolding by the older students that included intentional and supportive L1 and L2 language use, persistence and follow-up, and thoughtful contextualization of important words, plot points, and themes. Increased wait time on the part of older students was also a factor that influenced productivity and engagement in the sessions, as was younger students' familiarity with text. An analysis of

older students' post-reading reflections suggested that students who most consistently engaged in thoughtful reflection were also those who showed the most improvement in facilitating dialogic reading. Over time, older students assumed a greater sense of their responsibility (locus of control) in influencing partner reading and grew in self-efficacy as facilitators. Reflecting with others seemed to enhance students' capacities to both facilitate and reflect about dialogic reading.

Participation patterns linked to the intervention were still evident several weeks after the conclusion of the project. Pairs with older and younger students, and pairs and groups of younger students stopped to ask questions and discuss more frequently than they did before the intervention. Study participants guided non-participants to engage in this way, as well. Pairs and small groups of all older students did not utilize dialogic reading with one another after the project. There were also instances of students' applying dialogic reading strategies while reading aloud to the whole group (K-5<sup>th</sup>-grade). Overall, the intervention appeared to have influenced the ways in which students read and interacted during reading time at La Unidad.

In the next chapter, I examine students' learning on the personal plane of activity. I discuss relationships between participation at the interpersonal plane and what learning was evident at the personal plane. I trace the interpersonal patterns described in this chapter to patterns related to individual students' proficiency, conceptions, and insights.

## Chapter 6

### Findings: Personal Plane

In this chapter, I examine learning on the personal plane of activity, which, according to Rogoff, involves individual cognition, emotion, behavior, values, and beliefs (Rogoff, 1995). Rogoff and other sociocultural theorists argue that interpersonal activity guides the appropriation of individual-level participation and learning (1995). In Chapter 5, I described learning in terms of change over time in the interactions between students during partner reading. In this chapter, I again examine change over time, but focus the examination on indicators within individual children rather than between children in the partnership.

The chapter has two main parts. In the first part, I focus on intermediate-grade students' outcomes on the personal plane, and explore the multifaceted question: *How do intermediate-grade students' reading performance (accuracy, comprehension, rate), self-efficacy, engagement, and conceptions of reading change over the course of the project?* Then, I evaluate how personal plane outcomes relate to findings on the interpersonal plane. In the second part of the chapter, I turn my focus to primary-grade students, and investigate the question: *How do primary-grade students' literacy performance (story recall, listening comprehension, oral expression) and engagement change over the course of the project?* I also explore younger students' perspectives on their experiences in the project. Again, I juxtapose these outcomes to interpersonal findings.

## Intermediate-Grade Students

In my analysis of the intermediate-grade group, I investigated students' reading proficiency as measured by their performance on the Benchmark Assessment System 2 (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011), and also analyzed their conceptions of reading over time using data from interviews. All five students showed gains in reading proficiency as well as conceptual growth. An examination of the group's reflections and perspectives on the project also suggests a generally high level of enjoyment and engagement. These findings are detailed below.

**Literacy proficiency.** In the administration of Benchmark Assessment System 2, students read leveled books (levels A-Z) and responded to comprehension questions. Below is the text gradient that identifies how the text levels correspond with grade levels.

**Figure 4. Fountas and Pinnell Text Gradient (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011)**

<b>Fountas &amp; Pinnell Text Levels</b>	<b>Grade equivalent</b>
<b>ABC</b>	<b>Kindergarten</b>
<b>BCDEFGHI</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> grade</b>
<b>HIJKLM</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> grade</b>
<b>LMNOP</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> grade</b>
<b>OPQRST</b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup> grade</b>
<b>WTUVW</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup> grade</b>
<b>UWXY</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> grade</b>
<b>XYZ</b>	<b>7<sup>th</sup> grade</b>

For each book reading in this assessment, I calculated the student's oral reading accuracy percentage, comprehension percentage, and reading rate (words per minute and words correct per minute). Based off of accuracy and comprehension scores for each book reading, I determined if that particular book's text level (A-Z) was independent, instructional, or frustration for that particular student. Within the time available, I assessed students' reading of three leveled books each before the intervention and four leveled books after. Due to time limitations, it was not possible to determine independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels for all students.<sup>11</sup> Despite these limitations, the data reveal that students were able to read more difficult books at the independent level after the intervention than they were at the start. For example, Mariana could read as high as a level U text at the independent level at the start of the project, and was able to read up to level W text at this level eight weeks later. Table 8 shows students' pre and post performances on the BAS 2.

**Table 9. Pre and Post Performance on Reading Inventories (BAS 2)**

Level	Araceli (Gr.3)		Mariana (Gr. 3)		Helen (Gr. 4)		Karina (Gr. 5)		Teresa (Gr. 5)	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
<b>Independent</b>	Q	R,S,V (+5)	U	U,V,W (+2)	S	T, U, W (+4)	R	R, S (+1)	?	?
<b>Instructional</b>	R	U (+?)	W	Y (+2)	T, V	Y (+3)	S	T, U (+2)	S, T	S,T,V (+2)
<b>Frustration</b>	S	?	Y	?	?	?	T	?	U	?

Also, leveled texts that were difficult (frustration level) for students in regard to accuracy, comprehension or both accuracy and comprehension in the pre-assessments were more

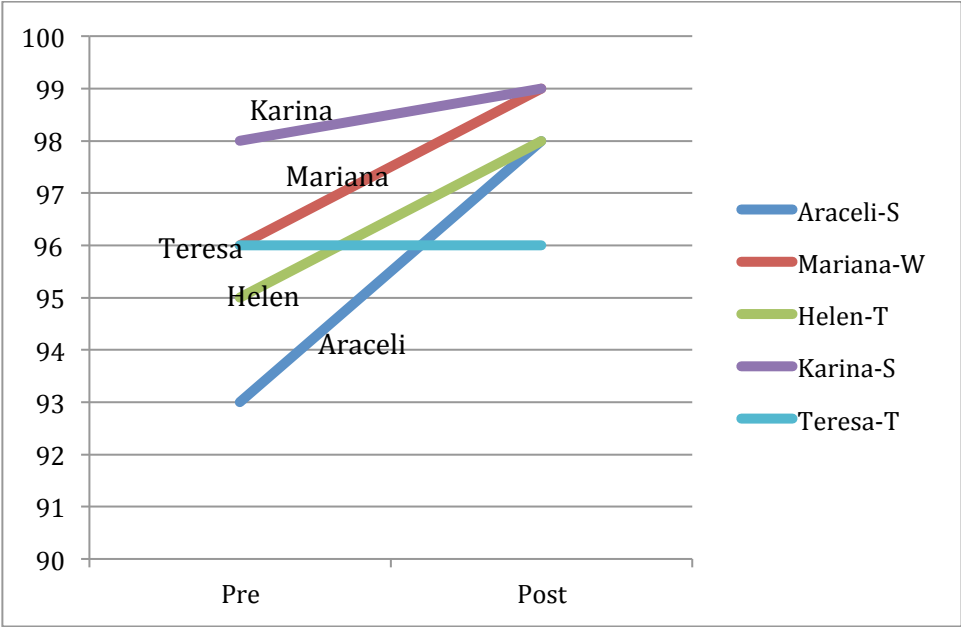
<sup>11</sup> For example, with time for only three book readings after the intervention, Teresa read level S, T, and V books. Her performance indicated that these were at her instructional level. I had to cease assessing Teresa after her level V passage, so I am not sure if W, X, Y, Z texts would be instructional or frustration level for her; I was unable to identify her highest instructional reading level.

accessible to them in post-assessment (instructional or independent level). For example, a level T book was hard for Karina to comprehend in the pre-assessment (frustration), but when she read another level T book in the post-assessment, she had higher scores on accuracy and comprehension (instructional).

The pre- and post- assessments in this study were administered less than eight weeks apart, yet all five older students demonstrated growth over that relatively short time. Araceli increased five levels and Helen four levels in eight weeks; each of these resemble the number of levels many intermediate-grade students are expected to advance in one school year. Karina and Teresa showed the most modest gains with an increase of two reading levels.

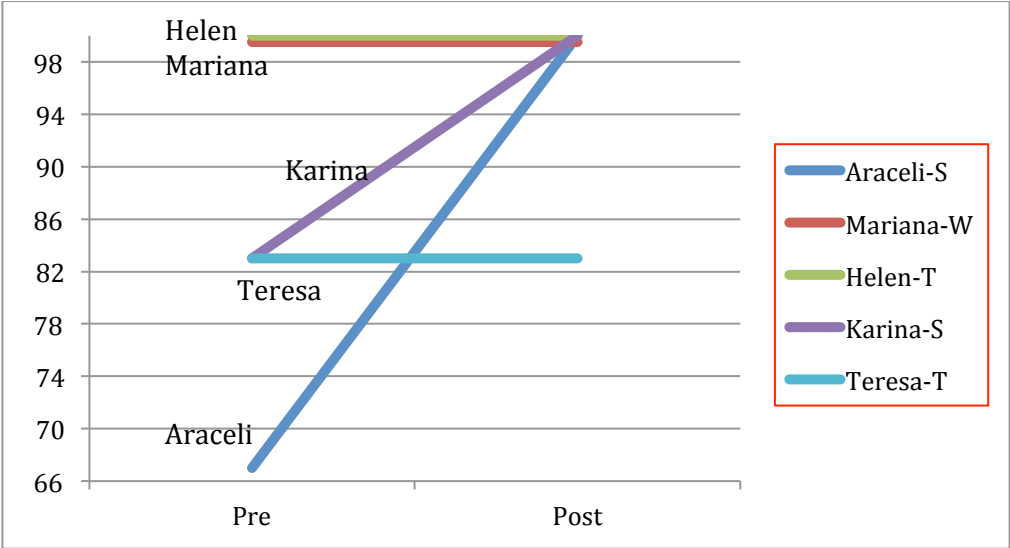
A closer look at each student's performance on the BAS 2 highlighted individual and group trends related to accuracy, comprehension, and rate (wcpm). Tables detailing each student's performance for each book reading can be found in Appendix D. It can be difficult to interpret changes in accuracy, fluency, and comprehension when comparing students' reading across different text levels. To mitigate some analytic comparison challenges for each student's case, I identified one reading level at which the student read a book both before and after the intervention, and compared those results. For example, Karina read level S books in the pre- as well as post- assessment, and Mariana read level W books in the pre- and post-assessment (same text level, different books). In the following figures (4, 5, 6), I display these pre/post comparisons for accuracy, comprehension, and rate (words correct per minute).

**Figure 5. Accuracy—Pre and Post Percentages for Same-Level Book (BAS 2)**



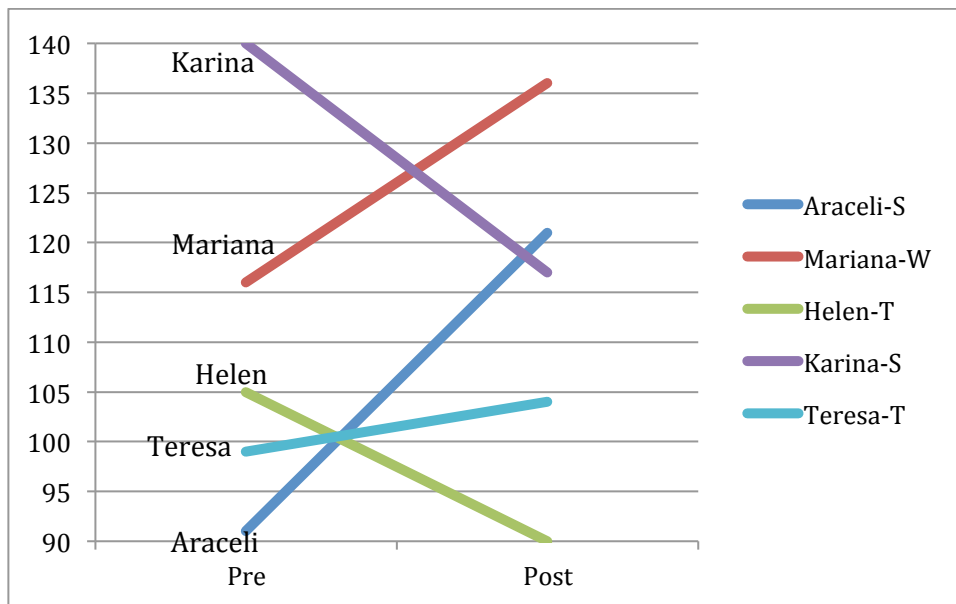
Four students improved in reading accuracy in the post-assessment, with three students climbing from instructional to independent overall levels. Teresa’s accuracy score remained the same at 96 percent (instructional).

**Figure 6. Comprehension—Pre and Post Percentages for Same-Level Book (BAS 2)**



Two students, Helen and Mariana, scored 100 percent in pre- and post-assessments, and two others, Araceli and Karina went from 67 and 83 percent respectively to 100 percent in the post-assessment. Again, Teresa's score held constant across the two; she scored at instructional both times. Despite Teresa's static pre/post performance on level T books, there were indications of her improvement in accuracy and comprehension, including her gain in instructional reading level (from level S to level V) (Table 8).

**Figure 7. Words Correct Per Minute—Pre and Post for Same-Level Book (BAS 2)**



Three students, Araceli, Mariana, and Teresa, read more words correctly per minute than they did when reading the same level text before the intervention. As with accuracy and comprehension, Araceli demonstrated the largest gains. Karina and Helen's WCPM scores went down. However, their accuracy went up on these same passages, and both scored 100 percent on comprehension; this may indicate they were slowing down to more closely attend to the text and its meaning (Valencia et al., 2011).

**Conceptions of reading.** Because this intervention foregrounded particular reasons for reading and ways of reading, I was curious to learn how students' participation in the project may have shaped their conceptions about reading and readers. Students' understandings about reading, including the purposes, skills, and dimensions of reading influence how they read and learn to read (Meyers & Paris, 1981). Intermediate-grade students in this study demonstrated substantive conceptual growth in this respect. Most of the data that informed my analysis of students' conceptions of reading came from responses to several pre- and post- interview questions, such as:

- What is a good reader?
- Who is a good reader you know? What makes him/her a good reader? (How do you know he/she is a good reader?)
- Are you a good reader? Why? (How do you know?)
- How does someone get better at reading?

Before the intervention, the students' responses to such questions conveyed conceptions that were strongly shaped by their school-based experiences with reading levels. The Fountas and Pinnell leveling system was used in all three of their schools, and it seemed to represent a dominant framework for the students' thinking about reading and success. This was particularly salient in their evaluations and explanations of their own reading proficiency: all five students referenced reading levels when discussing their own reading. The excerpt from Araceli's first interview is representative:

KB: Are you a good reader?

Araceli: Well...ya.

KB: Why do you think that?

Araceli: Well because...because I practice every day I have to read every day. And because I read on my level, I read on my level. And when I read on my level I'll probably get better.

KB: What does it mean to read on your level?

Araceli: Like the books at my level like at school...we have like reading levels and if you read at that level then you get better and better at it and then you can move up to the next level... So then we answer questions about what we read and if we do it good, we can move up.

“Doesn’t make mistakes” was another commonly mentioned indicator in students’ descriptions of good reading in pre-intervention interviews, as was the ability to read quickly (see Table 9). Helen and Teresa thought that speed was *the* fundamental quality of a good reader. When asked about a good reader she knew, Teresa responded,

Teresa: A good reader? I would describe, like, Mariana. I admire her reading a lot. So every time she reads a book she reads it in about five minutes. And *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* takes her about 10 minutes, so I feel like uh...

KB: So she reads fast?

Teresa: Ya.

KB: So besides being fast, is there anything else that makes Mariana a good reader?

Teresa: I can’t think of anything.

An analysis of student interview transcripts from after the intervention suggested that there were notable changes in students' conceptions of reading. In Table 9, I identify indicators that were commonly referenced in students' responses to the above interview questions; they are represented by category labels and associated exemplar quotes.

**Table 10. Pre and Post Trends Identified in Conceptions of Reading Analysis**

PRE-INTERVENTION			POST-INTERVENTION		
Indicator of good reading & Exemplar quote	% of students	Students who mentioned indicator	Indicator good reading & Exemplar quote	% of students	Students who mentioned indicator
Reading level "at grade level"	100%	Araceli Mariana Helen Karina Teresa	Attends to plot "knows what's happening in story"	100%	Araceli Mariana Helen Karina Teresa
Speed "fast"	80%	Araceli Mariana Helen Teresa	Metacognitive thinking "thinks about what they're reading"	80%	Araceli Mariana Helen Karina
Accuracy in decoding "doesn't make mistakes"	60%	Araceli Mariana Helen	Enjoyment "likes to read"	80%	Araceli Mariana Karina Teresa
Prosody "lots of expression"	40%	Helen Karina	Reading level "at or above level"	80%	Araceli Mariana Karina Teresa
Stamina "can read for a long time"	40%	Araceli Mariana	Focus/attention "pays attention to the book"	60%	Araceli Mariana Teresa
Frequency or disposition "practices/reads a lot"	40%	Araceli Teresa	Breadth of vocabulary "knows a lot of words"	40%	Araceli Helen
Text characteristics "can read long books"	40%	Araceli Helen	Retains story ideas "remembers things"	40%	Mariana Helen
Breadth of vocabulary "knows a lot of words"	20%	Araceli	Self questioning strategy "asks questions to themselves"	40%	Araceli Teresa
Metacognitive thinking "thinks about what they're reading"	20%	Mariana	Summarizing strategy "goes over the book to keep it in their head"	40%	Araceli Mariana
Focus/attention "someone who can focus"	20%	Karina	Fluent "doesn't have to stop"	20%	Helen

Problem solving "can figure things out"	20%	Helen
Library attendance "goes to the library"	20%	Karina

Students' responses to the same interview questions after the intervention revealed more complex and sophisticated conceptions, and reflected several concepts supported by the intervention. In particular, students expressed particular value for active, metacognitive reading. According to interviews, the students thought that good reading involved attending to meaning in text ("knows what's happening in a story"). Four of five students mentioned that good readers think about what they're reading. For example, whereas Teresa focused primarily on rate in her pre-intervention interview, her responses after the intervention attended to meaning-making and monitoring. She said, "A good reader, well, they know what's happening in the book, and if they don't know they'll stop and think about it and really pay attention to what's going on."

Teresa's quote also exemplifies students' intensified focus on strategic reading processes. She offered a theory of action about reading, suggesting that readers monitor and problem solve. The conceptions shared in post-interviews reflect more action-oriented understandings: readers think about what they are reading, they pay attention, ask questions, summarize and "keep it in their head," they "figure things out." Alternately, most of the indicators shared in pre-interviews had a less active focus. For example, speed, accuracy, and stamina were all mentioned before but not after the intervention. (That no one identified speed/rate as an indicator afterward signaled a substantial shift, as it was a dominant concept in pre-interviews.) The students' shift in conceptual focus represents an important change—away from superficial indicators and toward deeper indicators of good reading. A focus away from what readers are inherently like (i.e. fast)

or what they already know to what readers *do* and what readers *think about* is a productive and empowering theory of action for students as they work to develop a reader identity.

As with the other findings in this study, these outcomes cannot be attributed solely to the intervention. However, my analysis suggests that participation in the project likely contributed to students' shift in conceptual emphasis. For several weeks, these students engaged in reading activities and purposes that emphasized savoring and learning from books, not rushing through them. Students were actively engaging and interacting with one another as well as the texts during the intervention. The pattern of students' responses becoming more squarely focused on what readers do and think suggest that the intervention's activities may have prompted students to be more aware of what they were doing and thinking during reading.

The only pattern that held across the pre/post interviews as the prominence of reading levels. Reading levels continued to be a dominant concept in students' talk about reading success after the intervention, again suggesting that the emphasis of reading levels at schools have a strong influence on students' thinking about reading and efficacy.

**Perspectives on project.** In interviews after the intervention, students reflected on their experiences with partner reading. As mentioned in the methods chapter (Chapter 3), I was vigilant about phrasing questions in ways that would not lead students or obligate them to say they liked something or learned something. There were opportunities to discuss challenges and limitations. Accordingly, students shared opinions and stories of success as well as difficulty.

One theme across older students' responses was their appreciation of taking on a teacher role. This quote from Helen is representative of four of the students: "I really liked feeling like I was a teacher and that I could teach her (Beatriz) something." Four of the five (all but Mariana)

mentioned that they had fun or that enjoyed the project. Even Karina, who seemed to participate begrudgingly sometimes early on in project, expressed this sentiment. She said, “Like when we were better at it and we really got into the books, it was really fun. Like the kids were all excited and that was fun. They were funny.” Helen said that she was “not used to trying to get other kids into a book” before this, and she thought it was “a cool experience.” Perhaps this enjoyment, an indicator of engagement, is what prompted Araceli, Mariana, Helen, and Karina to reappropriate dialogic reading strategies and behaviors with other children and in other contexts. In interviews, these four explained that they tried to “do book talk” with younger siblings and cousins at home.

All five older students said they felt like the project was difficult in some ways. They all noted that it took patience to facilitate dialogic reading with their kindergarten partners. Mariana reflected, “I had to be patient—like really patient sometimes. I kept trying even when Daisy was distracted.” Similarly, Teresa said, “It took a lot of patience...like the hardest thing was getting Liana to pay attention at first.” (See Chapter 5 for an analysis of older students’ change in self-efficacy related to facilitating dialogic reading.)

When asked about their feelings about reading time more generally, four of five students reported that they liked reading time at La Unidad; this was compared to three of five before the project. Helen, the one student who said that she “kind of liked” reading time, explained that in the past she had been paired with a boy who did not want to pay attention. Before the intervention, Karina indicated that she kind of liked reading time, and after the project, she said that she liked it. I do not know for sure if participating in partner reading changed her perspective, but overall, it is a positive sign that none of the students had a more negative assessment of La Unidad’s reading time as a result of the intervention. Perhaps this was in part due to the alignment of the project with students’ existing practices and inclinations.

**Connections to interpersonal findings.** The conceptual and reading growth demonstrated by students in pre- and post- assessments and interviews parallel growth demonstrated by students in the interpersonal context of partner reading. Again, Araceli and Helen, who showed the greatest levels of improvement in their facilitation of dialogic reading as well as the most consistently astute reflection, also logged the most dramatic gains in reading proficiency on the BAS 2. Their peers, who also improved over time in dialogic reading and reflection, showed impressive gains on the BAS 2, as well, but to a lesser extent. One explanation for the difference is that the students who experienced a marked change in the productivity of partner reading experiences in fact had a more intensive intervention. This was especially true for students who improved fairly early on, which set them up to experience higher-level facilitation and conversation for more sessions.

It is interesting to note that Karina and Teresa, who had the most modest improvement on the reading inventories, had a number of things in common. They both were in 5<sup>th</sup> grade: perhaps the age difference was too wide for optimum mutual engagement. Their partners, especially Armando, were not as chatty as some of the other kindergartners, which could have limited the depth or sophistication of the conversations Karina and Teresa had. Both girls had Spanish-dominant partners, and were the only two older students who led discussion in Spanish (Karina also read in Spanish). It is possible that the nature of their linguistic participation in the intervention did not facilitate the kind of learning that would boost performance on the English-only BAS-2; similarly, it is possible that they experienced other kinds of learning that would not “show up” on the English assessment. Further, both Karina and Teresa were negotiating difficult family circumstances at the time of the study. This could have impacted what they were able to bring to the project. Teresa missed several planning sessions and had the fewest partner reading

sessions, which made the intervention less intensive for her. While Karina's attendance was regular, her engagement in planning sessions was not always very strong (due in part to behaviors associated with her personality disorder).

Looking across the group, the gains achieved by the older students on the BAS-2 inventories were promising. I was surprised at the students' rate of improvement, especially given the fact that the students did not spend more time reading (at least at La Unidad) than they did before the intervention. While they were not reading *more*, data suggest that they were reading *differently*. A reflection from Araceli, one that I also highlighted in Chapter 5, illustrates this:

When I read the books, like when I read them the day before and when I was reading them to Miguel, I was thinking about what the book had that Miguel could learn about...I got better at reading more carefully, because I used to read like really fast...and I read more clearly for him (Miguel) because sometimes some people don't understand me when I read too fast.

Araceli was aware that she was thinking intently about what she was reading. She was attentive to the process of reading for meaning and word learning, and conveying story and word meaning for Miguel. Mariana conveyed a similar reflection:

For partner reading before--it was fine, I liked it. But now it's kind of harder, because I think that I would have just read them, like the books, and not really thought about it. But now when we read, we like *really* read.

Teresa and Helen shared comparable reflections. These ideas were affirmed in student interviews after the intervention, and were reflected in the analysis of students' conceptions of reading. As

mentioned, the girls talked about reading, and more specifically, good reading and good readers, with much more attention to meaning-making and metacognitive processes.

Students' perspectives on the project signify that they were substantially engaged in the enterprise of dialogic reading with younger students. The self-reported enjoyment they experienced and their concerted attempts to overcome the challenges associated with dialogic reading are indicators of this. Their engagement in this work was arguably a central factor behind their efforts to apply dialogic reading strategies and behaviors to other reading contexts. As mentioned in Chapter 5, four of the five older students were observed utilizing dialogic reading activities at La Unidad after the intervention; these same students also detailed their facilitation efforts with siblings and/or cousins at home.

### **Primary-Grade Students**

The intervention in this study was less intense for primary students. It was shorter, as they did not participate in a two-week training as the intermediate-grade students had. Also, while older students spent four days per week focused on either planning for or implementing dialogic reading, younger students participated in cross-age partner reading twice per week during the intervention. Nonetheless, analyses of primary students' activity on the personal plane revealed considerable growth. This is evident in their pre/post performances on the Woodcock-Johnson III Story Recall Subtest and an elaboration task.

**Story recall.** All five kindergarten students showed gains in the Woodcock-Johnson III (WJ-III) Story Recall subtest. This suggests their listening comprehension and/or language production improved over the course of the intervention. All of the students showed gains of more than one year of estimated age equivalence (EAE) from the start to the end of the project

(see Table 10), with a mean EAE increase of 1.99 years for the group. The pre- and post-tests were administered seven weeks apart. Three of the students—Armando, Beatriz, and Liana—each had an EAE that was lower than their biological age before the project (4.11, 4.11, and 5.2, respectively); at the end, all five of the students’ performances aligned with EAEs higher than their actual ages.

**Table 11. Younger Students’ Pre/Post Story Recall and Elaboration Response**

Student	PRE-INTERVENTION			POST-INTERVENTION		
	Story Recall Estimated Age Equivalent*	Prompted elaboration response		Story Recall Estimated Age Equivalent (& pre/post gains)	Prompted elaboration response	
		Average number of words	Relevance**		Average number of words (pre/post gains)	Relevance**
<b>Miguel</b>	9.1 (Eng)	6.5	2/2	10.3 (+1.2)	8.0 (+1.5)	3/4
<b>Beatriz</b>	4.11 (Sp/Eng)	3.0	½	7.45 (+3.34)	9.0 (+6.0)	3/3
<b>Daisy</b>	6.7 (Eng)	3.5	½	9.2 (+2.5)	12.3 (+8.8)	3/3
<b>Armando</b>	4.11 (Sp)	4.0	½	6.11 (+2)	7.0 (+3.0)	2/2
<b>Liana</b>	5.2 (Sp)	6.0	½	6.11 (+1.9)	12.0 (+6.0)	2/2
<b>Group means</b>	5.84	4.6	60%	7.83 (+1.99)	9.66 (+5.06)	100%

\*years

\*\*number of relevant responses (i.e. responses that directly connected to the question prompt)/total number of responses)/total prompted responses

It seems unlikely that students actually developed one, two, or three years of age equivalence in the seven weeks between assessments, especially since the intervention was not remarkably intense for some students (especially for those whose partners did not consistently have high levels of implementation). While it is possible that the kindergartners did improve in listening comprehension and oral language production over the course of the intervention, more than anything, I hypothesize that these large gains are largely a function of the students being

accustomed to the kind of tasks required by the WJ-III. Their being more accustomed to listening intently and recalling and orally imparting information from the text (while using the language of the text), is in itself a positive outcome. This type of language use aligns closely with the kinds of academic language functions and forms that are common in schools (August & Shanahan, 2006); their experiences with conversing about text may be better equip and position them to engage fully in the language practices of school.

**Prompted elaboration task.** For one of each set of two stories in the recall subtest, I asked students an open-ended follow-up question, and analyzed their responses. (Note: I waited until after the recall task was completed/scored before asking the question.) The questions went beyond plot recall, and mirrored the types of questions that were commonly used in dialogic reading sessions with their partners. For example, I asked, “Why do you think Billy did that?” and “What do you think might happen next?”

The students’ responses in the post-assessment were more elaborate than in the pre-test. The group word count mean more than doubled, climbing from 4.6 words before the intervention to 9.66 words afterwards. Their responses were also more relevant or connected to the stories and prompts. In the post-assessment, 100% of student responses “made sense” or showed appropriate integration/understanding of story concepts as compared to 60% before. Findings from this elaboration task reaffirmed the WJ-III results, and indicated greater attention to and understanding of stories, as well as increased skill, will and/or comfort in discussing text ideas.

**Perspectives on project.** According to interviews, younger students also enjoyed “book talk” during partner reading. Paralleling Mariana’s responses, Daisy (her partner) was the least enthused. When I asked younger students to reflect on their experiences with partner reading,

four of them eagerly looked around the room to find their older partners, smiling when they spotted them or expressing disappointment if they were not there. This was one indicator that the kindergarteners seemed to have grown in fondness for their older counterparts.

Just as I did in the interviews before the intervention, I again asked students what it was like to be a younger student in a K-5 program. All of the students enthusiastically declared that they liked it. In the earlier interview, Miguel expressed some trepidation about working with older students, but in the second interview, he announced, “I like it! And I liked reading with Araceli.” Beatriz also said she liked working with Helen because it was fun and “Helen had a beautiful voice.” Armando and Liana expressed similar opinions about their partners, and were especially appreciative of their partners’ reading and/or discussion in Spanish. In an excerpt of an interview with Armando, he shared his thoughts about this:

KB: Habló Karina español o inglés o los dos? [Did Karina speak Spanish or English or both?]

Armando: Español. Un poco de inglés. [Spanish. A little English.]

KB: Y tú? Tú hablaste español o inglés o los dos? [And you? Did you speak Spanish or English or both?]

Armando: Español también. [Spanish, also.]

KB: Y cómo fue así? [And how was that?]

Armando: ¡Muy bien! Sí—me gustó. I liked it! [Very well. Ya-I liked it. I liked it!]

Liana also shared that she welcomed Teresa’s use of Spanish, saying, “It was very, very good.” Armando and Liana’s enthusiasm about this aspect of the project suggests that perhaps their partners’ language decisions, made in an effort to be responsive, was a key factor in the younger students’ enhanced engagement in reading.

Like the older group, the younger students also identified some difficult aspects of the project, although they had fewer to report. When reflecting on the project, Daisy expressed some dissatisfaction with Mariana. She said, “Mariana was boring, but everything else was good.” Daisy thought that both she and Mariana improved toward the end of the project. Liana also voiced some challenges, which are mentioned in her interview excerpt here:

KB: Did you think that some things were difficult?

Liana: Oh yes!

KB: What was difficult?

Liana: Talking about it. The books.

KB: How was talking about the books difficult?

Liana: She (Teresa) stopped. The first time she stopped and she did like she talked about it and it was so, so hard.

KB: What was hard?

Liana: Trying to remember was so hard. Then it was a little more easier.

KB: Trying to remember what?

Liana: The book. She asked questions.

KB: And you said it got easier...what got easier?

Liana: Remembering and stuff. I remembered and it was so hard.

Liana’s reflection illustrates the challenging cognitive work that was presented to her and perhaps other younger students, most of whom were used to quietly listening during partner reading time. Her insights shed light on why students, even those who did not produce much language themselves during the partner reading sessions, may have stretched and grown as a result of the project. Liana’s sense that “it was a little more easier” over time was reaffirmed in

other kindergarteners' interviews. For example, Miguel thought that dialogic reading was a bit hard at first, but he caught on; "I got used to it, then I got good," he explained.

**Connections to interpersonal plane.** The two students who produced the most language during the partner reading sessions, Beatriz and Daisy, also had the largest gains on the WJ-III story recall test. It is interesting and surprising that students who did not talk very prolifically during their dialogic reading sessions still showed notable improvement on the WJ-III and the elaboration task. For example, until the last two partner reading sessions, Armando spoke few words during dialogic reading with Karina, yet he posted a two-year growth in estimated age equivalence on the WJ-III story recall. One explanation for this is that the dialogic reading paradigm encouraged particular habits of mind. Even though Armando had not consistently shared his thinking aloud during partner reading, perhaps the prompting and sharing from his partner fostered a particular way of listening to and engaging with text that promoted listening comprehension.

There was not necessarily a direct relationship between younger students' WJ-III improvement and their older reading partners' BAS 2 improvement. For example, Miguel showed the smallest gains in the younger group while his partner, Araceli, had the largest gains as measured by the reading inventories. An examination of Miguel's reading participation before the project suggested that he already had high levels of language production and listening comprehension. Dialogic reading activities resembled the kinds of reading and thinking that Miguel did anyway; whether he was reading alone or with a partner, he seemed to be "in conversation" with the text. (Miguel was the only student in the baseline partner reading session, older or younger, who initiated conversation.) Perhaps the intervention was not really much of a

stretch for him, whereas it represented a quite different way of reading for his partner, and for some of the other students both older and younger.

When analyzing the partner reading transcripts, it occurred to me that the relationships between some partners seemed to strengthen over time, and I wondered if that was a dominant factor contributing to both the older and younger students' comfort and willingness to talk and interact with one another. I wondered if students were actually improving or if they were simply just better friends. Because the students showed marked improvement on assessments like the BAS-2 and the WJ-III (administered by someone other than their respective partners), we can infer that students' improvement was more than a matter of growing comfort/friendship with an individual. Although it is likely that deepening relationships did affect students' participation (the design of the intervention rests on this assumption), the outcomes represented in the personal plane suggest that the learning and activity that occurred in the interactions between partners impacted individual students in ways that reached beyond those particular contexts.

Interviews with younger students after the intervention revealed that most students enjoyed participating in dialogic reading. This reaffirmed indications of increased engagement in the partner reading transcripts (as described in Chapter 5).

## **Summary**

All students, younger and older, showed improvement/growth at personal plane. All older students showed gains on informal reading inventories and demonstrated more sophisticated and active conceptions of reading and the reading process, which seemed to be greatly influenced by the intervention's emphasis on meaning-making, metacognition and learning from and enjoying books. Students who demonstrated the most substantial growth in facilitating dialogic reading

also showed the largest gains in reading assessments. Younger students showed growth in listening comprehension and oral language production; dialogic reading paradigm seemed to orient them to the process of engaging in and responding to text. Perspectives shared by both older and younger participants suggested high levels of enjoyment from and engagement in dialogic activities during partner reading. The growth documented on the interpersonal and personal planes of participation contributed to change at La Unidad on the institutional plane. I examine these relationships in Chapter 7.

## Chapter 7

### Findings at the Institutional Plane

In this chapter, I foreground the institutional plane, and explore development or contextual transformation of the After School Youth Program at La Unidad (Rogoff, 1995). Rogoff posits that the institutional plane involves shared history, languages, rules, values, identities, beliefs<sup>12</sup>—all of which influence and are influenced by interpersonal and personal activity. Other activity theorists include the “division of labor” as another component of the community or institutional plane (e.g. Engestrom, 1999). In Chapter 4, *Understanding Context*, I noted numerous existing institutional factors that shaped literacy-related activity and interactions in the program. The intervention itself represented a change in the rules of the Unidad context (i.e. norms and expectations during partner reading); but because the intervention was designed to accord with La Unidad’s existing contextual factors—the schedule, regular activities, and especially the values and goals—Gloria and I did not aim for or anticipate large changes at the institutional level.

Is it not common for reading intervention research to include explicit attention to community/institutional plane. However, the context of La Unidad was so central to the rationale and design of the intervention and the investigation per se, an institutional level examination was warranted. As a researcher who is deeply interested in issues of sustainability, it seemed strategic to consider how the intervention influenced the context. I reasoned that this could illuminate the

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<sup>12</sup> There are a myriad broad, societal factors on the institutional plane that shaped activity at La Unidad, such as its political history, relational contexts between community organizations and schools, the positionality of immigrants and ethnic and ethnic and linguistic-minority youth and families in society and in the U.S. education system. My analysis of institutional development in this study, however, assumed a more local view.

extent to which contextual factors were in place to sustainably continue the interpersonal and personal development associated with the intervention.

As explained in Chapters 5 and 6, the dialogic reading intervention influenced students' interactions, proficiency, and conceptions. In the analysis described in this chapter, I drew on interpersonal and personal level findings and noted how those changes overlapped with development on the institutional plane. I also drew on field notes from pre/post observations of the program (i.e. schedule, activities, arrangements) and pre/post interviews with Gloria to examine changes in the context at La Unidad. Because Gloria knew the context so comprehensively and because her decision-making was central to programmatic structures and activities, her insights were instrumental in this particular analysis. There were no sweeping changes at the institutional level, but there were several indications of development, which I describe here.

### **Division of Labor**

A comparison of field notes from before and after the intervention highlighted ways in which the division of labor in La Unidad's reading time had changed over the course of the project. This was especially true of partner and small group reading. As I described in Chapter 5, participants stopped to ask questions and discuss more frequently than they did before the intervention. Study participants guided non-participants to engage in this way, as well. Gloria noticed and appreciated this difference. She shared, "They (students) were asking questions and having a conversation throughout the book. And it was like, it wasn't formal but it was different." This dynamic was in contrast to patterns of reading time documented before the intervention, wherein any discussion around text was predominately facilitated by adult staff

members. Gloria welcomed this change in division of labor, and conveyed that it prompted her to rethink “who does what” at La Unidad. She said,

Now I see them having conversation during the book—asking questions, thinking of a further step when using a book. I see myself doing that as a teacher, but I never thought about doing it with the students and having them be the leaders. Now there are many people, teachers and students, who can do that here—not just us, the teachers, like before.

This quote illustrates Gloria’s appreciation for how the division of labor change positioned older students as leaders.

Given the documented benefits of dialogic reading for emerging readers in prior research (Beimiller, 1999; Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000; Whitehurst et al., 1994) as well the benefits for both primary and intermediate students identified in this study, it is promising that there was an influx of capable facilitators at La Unidad. This increased the likelihood that young students would have the opportunity to engage in a high-leverage literacy activity. It is unclear exactly how many students had the skill and will to facilitate book talk or dialogic reading beyond the end of the project, but I observed 15 students demonstrating efforts to discuss books with others while reading in post-intervention sessions. This included older and younger students who participated in the study as well as other students who picked up on the dialogic activities from peers (See Chapter 5).

These shifts in the division of labor at La Unidad were also evident when individual students read to the whole group. Gloria observed, “They’re (older students) asking questions throughout the book...some of them are even doing this when they’re reading in front of the whole class. That was new.” Several students, both study participants and non-participants, re-appropriated dialogic reading strategies in the whole group format, emulating the instructional

method of interactive read aloud (Beck & McKeown, 2001). As mentioned in Chapter 5, before the intervention, La Unidad teachers engaged students in discussion or checked comprehension (or checked attentiveness in some cases); during and after the intervention, some students assumed the responsibility of leading discussion rather than defaulting to teacher-directed questions. Gloria reported that this division of labor shift led to higher engagement during the whole group reading time.

### **Rules**

The dialogic reading intervention introduced different rules, also known as norms or expectations (Engestrom, 1999), into the Unidad context. Analyses foregrounding interpersonal and personal levels revealed that the project influenced the ways in which students read and thought about reading even several weeks after the intervention. For most of the students involved in the project, it became normal to discuss books with other children (See Chapter 5). Gloria described some of the differences she observed:

Students participated in the conversations—they were engaged. They were serious about their reading. The interaction—that was something that I noticed that was quite different...having a conversation throughout the book. And it was like, it wasn't formal but it was different. And now I still see them doing that now, many of them.

Gloria's quote suggests that this shift in what was normal or expected from individuals and pairs (perhaps reflecting the shared beliefs about what reading time is about), sustained beyond the end of the intervention.

### **Goal-Oriented Activity**

Gloria consistently linked the shifts she saw during the intervention to La Unidad's long-established goals for the After School Youth Program. The four goals were: (1) academic achievement, (2) bilingualism and cultural maintenance/recapture, (3) community involvement, and (4) non-violence training (See Chapter 4 for an elaboration of the goals). Gloria explained that these goals reflected deeply held values of the larger La Unidad agency and community. The pre/post institutional level analysis showed that these goals themselves were not influenced by the intervention. However, there were some indications that the project buttressed certain kinds of activity that effectively engaged the goals. I discuss each of them here.

**Academic achievement.** As mentioned, the intervention led to a shift in the rules (norms and expectations) that mediated La Unidad's reading time. This seemed to contribute to students' "more serious" and more engaged reading, which connected with La Unidad's goal of promoting students' academic achievement. Furthermore, outcomes described in Chapters 5 and 6 showed that the intervention may have enhanced students' literacy proficiency. That older and younger students' performances improved on standard literacy assessments suggests that the learning generated from the dialogic reading project may have had the potential to transfer to other academic enterprises and settings.

**Bilingualism and cultural maintenance/recapture.** As described in Chapter 5, an analysis of the interpersonal plane revealed examples of more frequent Spanish language use during reading time, with two of the five pairs discussing books in Spanish (and one of these two pairs reading in Spanish) over the course of the project (See Chapter 5). Gloria appreciated those cases, saying, "I noticed a difference in language with some of them. For some students, Spanish is very fluent to them, and they feel more comfortable. I think it really makes a difference when it's read to them in Spanish." The two older students who facilitated dialogic reading mainly in

Spanish (Karina and Teresa) reported increased self-efficacy in Spanish literacy skills at the end of the project. While these individuals and their partners seemed to have made progress toward La Unidad's goal of fostering bilingualism, the project seemed to lead to uneven opportunities in this way (which perhaps suggests no clear or conspicuous institutional transformation related to bilingualism). Three pairs conducted partner reading only in English (although there were a small number of instances in which a bilingual older student, Araceli, taught her English-dominant partner Spanish words). One of the younger students who experienced English-only dialogic reading was Spanish-dominant (Beatriz). In one sense, her case could represent an example of promoting bilingualism (she was very strong in Spanish and was becoming more fluent in English), but could also be an example of a Spanish-dominant student's move away from her first language.

Gloria thought that some of the books that were used in the project were helpful for promoting bilingualism (at least for the pairs that utilized both English and Spanish) and cultural development. She said, "I think the books were very helpful because they were in in English and Spanish, some of them, and they had stories that were related to people they knew." Gloria's quote highlights the potential that books hold as mediating tools, orienting activity toward the goal of bilingualism and cultural maintenance/recapture. Reading books with Spanish language created opportunities for students to read, hear, and use Spanish language from text in discussions. Several of the books used in the project created opportunities for students to discuss Latino heroes (i.e. Pelé, Gabriel García Márquez) and issues that affect many Latino families and communities (i.e. *From North and South/Del Norte al Sur* (Lainez, 2010)).

Before the intervention, there was evidence (i.e. interviews, observations, previous research) showing that students' existing cultural communities of practice involved and valued

the nurturing of cross-age relationships and the care and support of younger community members (e.g., Brayko (Gence), in press). With these practices and values in mind, there is evidence that this intervention supported students' activity and progress related to the goal of cultural maintenance and recapture. The division of labor arrangements facilitated opportunities for this type of value-laden participation to flourish. I discuss this further in my explanation of the next goal, community involvement.

**Community involvement.** In both pre- and post-intervention interviews, community involvement was the goal most often mentioned by Gloria in her discussion of the project. Perhaps this is where she saw the greatest potential for, and impact from, the intervention. Gloria reported that the changes in the division of labor at La Unidad positioned older students (and some younger students) as leaders in the program. In her post-intervention interview, Gloria frequently expressed her appreciation of the leadership she observed older students enacting during and after the project; she linked the enhanced leadership to La Unidad's goal of promoting community involvement. She reported,

I noticed leadership with some specific students. Like before when we used to do the partner reading, some students would complain about reading to somebody else, and I've been observing those particular students, and I haven't seen that, you know, their complaining. Now they're asking questions throughout the book—some of them even reading in front of the class. That was new for some of them. We want them to be leaders and help each other and be patient with others, and they did a good job being leaders in that way...I was impressed with what I saw from them.

In this quote, Gloria noted particular skills and dispositions that she thought were important for effective leadership and community involvement (at the program level). She believed the

intervention helped to support the development of these skills and dispositions in the older students.

**Non-violence training.** There was no evidence that the project supported progress toward the goal of promoting non-violence. There were indications of positive dispositional change (i.e. increased patience), and there were instances in which students engaged in meaningful discussion about books with themes related to nonviolence (e.g., *Side by Side/Lado a Lado*: César Chávez and Delores Huerta). Although these may have had indirect connections to La Unidad's goal of fostering non-violence, I cannot make claims about shifts on the institutional level related to this goal.

### **Structural Decisions**

As illustrated in interview data excerpts throughout this chapter, Gloria was struck by the growth she observed in students' facilitation and participation in dialogic reading, and was most struck by the engagement and leadership she had seen from older students. This burgeoning competence among the group of students at la Unidad influenced several of Gloria's subsequent structural decisions.

In an attempt to leverage the benefits of "book talk," she arranged for the entire After School Youth Program (students K-5<sup>th</sup> grade) to link up with La Unidad's Early Childhood Program for partner reading. Each After School student was paired with a preschool student, and read two or more books in the session<sup>13</sup>. Gloria shared that she planned to continue the reading partnership with the Early Childhood Program; I observed only one visit. She was particularly interested in having the younger After School Program children practice taking leadership roles

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<sup>13</sup> I conducted an observation during the first of these sessions. Two of the five older study participants were present for this, and they did stop during the reading of the books to discuss with their preschool partners. They also discussed the story with their partners afterwards.

by reading to the preschool children. Gloria's decision to build these kinds of opportunities into the structure of La Unidad was another signifier that the intervention and its outcomes influenced the Unidad context.

Gloria reported that she was very likely to continue encouraging students to have conversations while reading books. She said, "I'm very interested to involve things when students are engaged and having fun, and they are asking for it." In her post-intervention interview, Gloria told me that two separate parents had approached her to ask if their children could participate in the project. She reported, "I said to those parents, 'Well, we (Gloria and students who were not study participants) can do the same thing!' So I hope to do that." Gloria regularly asked me about books and activities, which perhaps signaled interest in building her own competence in implementing and continuing the dialogic reading activities. There were no data indicating that Gloria had a specific plan for how she would continue with the dialogic reading work, and I do not know the extent to which she enacted her intentions to more explicitly build dialogic reading activities into the institutional structure of La Unidad. However, the fact that several students, parents, and Gloria herself shared the desire for the activities to continue and to expand to all students, in itself an indicator of the intervention's influence on the La Unidad community, and signals the likelihood of dialogic reading work continuing.

There is evidence that Gloria approached this collaborative project as a professional learning opportunity. Above, I described indications that Gloria learned something about literacy instruction from the teaching and learning associated with the intervention; there were other indications suggesting she learned from having a study conducted at La Unidad. Gloria seemed to be interested and invested in the data collection process. She requested that I add a question to student interview protocols and share excerpts so she could learn more about their

reading interests and preferences; she wanted to use the data to inform her book purchases and program activities. One day when I was away from La Unidad, Gloria made copies of the interview instrument I had created (a tool with a four-point smiley face scale inspired by the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990)) (See Appendix E), and distributed it to all of the students in the program. She reported,

I really liked that. It was very interesting to see what students were feeling about reading out loud and reading different kinds of books, and I was surprised by some of them. It made me think about what they like and how we can help them. I want to keep doing that every once in a while because I was very interested.

Gloria's expressed interest in and reappropriation of some of the study's data collection methods are perhaps signs of personal level change. Rogoff's framework posits that individual learning can lead to institutional change, particularly when an individual is as influential in a context as Gloria was at La Unidad. Again, based on my data set, I do not know if there was long-term institutional change related to Gloria's enhanced interest in collecting data about students' reading.

### **Summary**

An analysis of the institutional plane revealed modest signs of change in the La Unidad context. Perhaps the most prevalent and visible change related to the division of labor among individuals in the program. The intervention positioned older students as leaders and facilitators of dialogic reading, a role previously enacted mainly by adults at La Unidad (at least at a systems level). Several students also took on a facilitator role while reading to the whole group; they effectively led discussions, a task previously conducted only by teachers. The intervention also

led to a shift in shared norms and expectations around partner reading came to include the expectation of discussion, which required and inspired higher levels of engagement.

The changes in division of labor and rules productively supported three of the four long-established goals of La Unidad's after school program (academic achievement, bilingualism and cultural maintenance/recapture, community involvement, nonviolence). Gloria committed to a number of structural changes (and prospective changes) that were inspired by students' notable improvement and efficacy in leading text-based conversations, signifying the possibility that continued cross-age and multilingual dialogic reading activities might be sustained in the Unidad context.

## Chapter 8

### Discussion

In this chapter, I revisit my research questions and summarize findings from previous chapters. Then, I argue the educational importance of this study by discussing contributions and implications. I also acknowledge the study's limitations and offer recommendations for future research; these are woven throughout the chapter.

### Summary of Findings

I explored four main questions in this study. Collectively, they attended to each of Rogoff's planes (one foregrounded interpersonal, two foregrounded personal, and one foregrounding institutional level of sociocultural activity). Each of the four focused on change over time.

*Research Question #1: How does the dialogic reading intervention influence intermediate and primary-grade students' participation and linguistic production in partner reading?*

An examination of the partner reading transcripts, videos, and reflections collected during the intervention, and a comparison of field notes collected before and after the intervention, indicated that there were some notable changes in La Unidad students' participation patterns that seemed to be largely influenced by the dialogic reading intervention. Across the group, there was greater quantity of text-focused talk, with younger students' contributions to conversations becoming much more prolific. This led to a more equitable ratio of talk between older and younger students. For both older and younger students, there was an increased use of sophisticated

vocabulary in discussions, with more frequent use of text vocabulary and other academic language. Finally, there was enhanced engagement in both groups—with older and younger students demonstrating higher cognitive investment in dialogic reading, older but especially younger students showing more frequent on-task behavior, and both groups displaying more signs of enjoyment and emotional engagement. These trends held true for all five pairs, but some of the trends were more pronounced in certain pairs, and there was variation in the trajectory of the five pairs.

An analysis of sessions in which these promising trends were prevalent, somewhat prevalent, and not prevalent suggested that the outcomes seemed to be dependent on—or at least related to—a number of factors. One factor was the use of question clusters, and in particular, lines of questioning that fostered talk and thinking with open-ended prompts. Another major factor was scaffolding by the older students that included intentional and supportive L1 and L2 language use, persistence and follow-up, and thoughtful contextualization of important words, plot points, and themes. Increased wait time on the part of older students was also a factor that influenced productivity and engagement in the sessions, as was younger students' familiarity with text. An analysis of older students' post-reading reflections suggested that students who most consistently engaged in thoughtful reflection were also those who showed the most improvement in facilitating dialogic reading. Over time, older students assumed a greater sense of their responsibility (locus of control) in influencing partner reading and grew in self-efficacy as facilitators. Opportunities to exchange ideas and reflect in a group of peers seemed to enhance initially less-reflective students' capacities to both facilitate and reflect about dialogic reading.

Participation patterns that were nurtured and supported during the intervention were still evident several weeks after the conclusion of the project. Pairs with older and younger students,

and pairs and groups of younger students stopped to ask questions and discuss substantially more frequently than they did before the intervention. Study participants guided non-participants to engage in this way, as well. Pairs and small groups of all older students did not utilize dialogic reading with one another after the project. There were also instances of students' applying dialogic reading strategies while reading aloud to the whole group (K-5<sup>th</sup>-grade). Overall, the intervention appeared to have influenced the ways in which participants interacted during reading time at La Unidad.

*Research Question #2: How do intermediate-grade students' reading performance (accuracy, comprehension, rate), self-efficacy, engagement, and conceptions of reading change over the course of the project?*

Older students exhibited gains in overall reading levels on the BAS 2. On this composite measure of accuracy and comprehension, students' improvement ranged from an increase of two to an increase of five reading levels on the Fountas and Pinnell text gradient. A comparison of students' performances before and after the intervention showed that leveled-text that was difficult for students on pre-assessments was read in the post-assessment with higher accuracy, higher comprehension, or both higher accuracy and comprehension for four of five participants. The older students demonstrated more sophisticated and action-oriented conceptions of reading and the reading process, which seemed to be greatly influenced by the intervention's emphasis on meaning-making, metacognition, deliberation, and learning from and enjoying books. Students who demonstrated the most substantial growth in facilitating dialogic reading (as determined by the greatest amount of change in the amount and quality of text talk in their partner reading transcripts) also showed the largest gains in reading assessments. Observations,

partner reading transcripts, and interviews suggested that older students showed higher levels of cognitive, behavioral and emotional engagement.

*Research Question #3: How do primary-grade students' literacy performance (story recall, listening comprehension, oral expression) and engagement change over the course of the project?*

All of the younger students showed growth in listening comprehension and oral language production as measured by the Story Recall Subtest of the Woodcock Johnson III Tests of Achievement. All five students showed increases in the estimated age equivalence (EAE), ranging from 1.2- to 3.34-year gains in EAE on the WJ-III. They also showed gains on a post-recall prompted elaboration task; their responses contained more words (the group mean increased from 4.6 to 9.66 words), and were more relevant or connected to story content (60% of responses were relevant in pre-assessment and 100% were relevant in post-assessment). The dialogic reading paradigm seemed to orient them to the process of engaging in and responding to text. Perspectives shared by younger participants suggested high levels of self-reported enjoyment from and engagement in dialogic activities during partner reading.

*Research Question #4: How does the cross-age dialogic reading intervention influence La Unidad's contextual factors (reading structures and arrangements, expectations and norms for reading time)?*

An analysis of the institutional plane revealed modest signs of change in the La Unidad context. Perhaps the most prevalent and visible change related to the division of labor among individuals in the program. The intervention positioned older students as leaders and facilitators of dialogic reading, a role previously enacted mainly by adults at La Unidad. Several students

also took on a facilitator role while reading to the whole group; they effectively led discussions, a task previously conducted only by teachers. The intervention also led to a shift in shared norms and expectations around partner reading came to include the expectation of discussion, which required and inspired higher levels of engagement.

The changes in division of labor and rules productively supported three of the four long-established goals of La Unidad's after school program (academic achievement, bilingualism and cultural maintenance/recapture, community involvement). Gloria committed to a number of structural changes (and prospective changes) that were inspired by students' notable improvement and efficacy in leading text-based conversations, signifying the possibility that continued cross-age and multilingual dialogic reading activities might be sustained in the Unidad context.

### **Educational Importance and Implications**

These findings contribute to existing research literature in a number of ways. I have focused my discussion of contributions and implications on two main areas: (1) responsive instruction and (2) literacy education. These represent realms of scholarship to which I believe this study contributes the most.

**Culturally responsive instruction.** The intervention in this study represented an attempt to enact culturally responsive instruction. While there is a range of definitions and criteria in the literature on culturally responsive teaching (i.e. Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994), in this study, I drew on a conception of culturally responsive teaching put forth by Kathryn Au (2010). Au's quote gets at the definitional and philosophical essence of this pedagogy:

What is culturally responsive instruction? This form of teaching is based on the idea that students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds can be successful in school if lessons and activities build on the strengths they bring from home. The purpose of culturally responsive instruction, however, is not simply to allow children to feel comfortable in the classroom. The purpose is to improve students' opportunities for academic success by letting their existing strengths and interests serve as a bridge to the new learning offered by the school. (2010, p. 1)

There were two levels of instruction in this study: my own teaching efforts with the intermediate-grade students, and the teaching provided by the intermediate-grade students to their primary-grade partners. Perhaps it is an empirical question as to whether the instruction in these cases was, in fact, culturally responsive; this said, there is evidence that the teaching/learning in this research resembles Au's conception (above), and thus can add to the scholarly conversation about efforts to leverage students' experiences and strengths in their academic pursuits.

In this study, older and younger students experienced interpersonal and personal growth, perhaps more growth than would typically be expected in eight weeks. This suggests that they benefited from instruction that responded to their strengths and ways of being, corroborating prior research on models of culturally responsive instruction (Au, 1998; Heath, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lee, 2007). In the sub-sections below, I highlight insights and considerations related to this project that speak to the broader knowledge base of culturally responsive instruction. I advocate for a practice-oriented view of culture and careful consideration to existing strengths in culturally responsive instruction; I also argue for wider attention to out-of-school learning contexts as spaces for innovation and research.

*Practice-oriented view of culture.* The intervention was an example of instruction informed by some of the cultural *practices* utilized in and by this community rather than by an abstract view of culture as a set of essentialized characteristics (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003). It was not based on a set of assumed and generalized traits about Latinos, for example. I drew on research about immigrant families and Latino families to give broader context to this work (e.g. Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2008), but the participation patterns around which the intervention was designed were identified in the activity of particular students in a particular context. Connecting to students' and staff's actual practices seemed to be central to the effectiveness of the intervention. That said, the activities and demands associated with the intervention matched some students' repertoire of practices more closely than others—arguably making it more responsive to some than others.

Similarly, in foregrounding some practices, the project may have—at least temporarily—restrained other practices. For example, one of the defining characteristics of reading time at La Unidad is choice, and some of the students loved sinking into a chair to read self-selected books (i.e. young adult for older girls) independently, getting lost in the stories. This was a valued practice for some of them, and the intervention replaced this at least once a week for the older girls as they were prepped for their partner reading sessions.

This raises questions about other practices that could be leveraged in future literacy learning efforts. The intervention in this study was inspired by cross-age language and literacy practices I noted in previous research (Brayko (Gence), in press); the intervention was an effort to systematically encourage the more frequent, and in some ways more intentional, use of those practices. Some would consider the dialogic reading activities a hybrid practice, which embodied

both home and academic activities, values, and purposes (Gutiérrez, 2008). Given the promising outcomes of this work, I consequently ask: What other hybrid practices could be promoted via further instructional innovations? More research at La Unidad and other learning contexts and communities is warranted.

*Careful consideration to existing strengths.* The development of this intervention involved close consideration of what was (and wasn't) already in place. Many strengths, understandings, and practices already thrived among the students and staff at La Unidad, which meant that there were many areas on which I did not need to give explicit attention. For example, I did not need to 'sell' the idea or expectation of reading after school to any of the students. The expectation of reading with older or younger partners was very familiar at La Unidad. I did not need to convince or teach bilingual older students to utilize their partners' home language in text conversations. Many of the La Unidad students regularly switched registers of language across the day depending on the context and all of the teachers at La Unidad were bilingual. Language was very much on the radar of students at La Unidad. I believe this primed them to be more metalinguistic in their dialogic reading planning and facilitation than many other monolingual students would have been—especially monolingual students who had not spent time in a bilingual educational context.

With these established norms already in place, I was able to focus my instructional attention to that which was new (or perhaps not systematically enacted): the explicit teaching of particular dialogic reading facilitation strategies. Of course, one cannot design intentionally responsive instruction around existing strengths and practices without learning what some of those strengths and practices are. There were two important strategies I heavily utilized in order

to engage in this careful consideration: the application of Rogoffian sociocultural theory as well as close collaboration with La Unidad personnel.

Rogoff's framework was particularly helpful in the effort of investigating existing strengths and patterns of participation. The three planes framework compelled me as a researcher and as a teacher to be thorough in recognizing infrastructural components, interaction patterns, individual students' participation and inclinations, and the relationship between all of these. This kind of inquiry expands opportunities for culturally responsive instruction in that it obliges educators to acknowledge a more comprehensive account of sociocultural activity in which students engage. Without attending to this wider range of dimensions, efforts may focus on students' cognitive strengths (or challenges) but disregard how strengths might be fostered in authentic ways for meaningful purposes.

Collaboration with educators at La Unidad provided me with deeper understanding of students' repertoires of practice (and values shaping practices), resources, and context. Conversations with La Unidad administrators, students, and Gloria were particularly helpful for my learning and my ability to strategically focus instruction and designing responsive arrangements. The faster-than-expected growth that ensued may have in part resulted from this strategic focus, and highlights the potential benefits of forging close partnerships with community-based educators, particularly those who have deep cultural and contextual knowledge of the students, families, and communities they serve.

These kinds of collaborative efforts can be helpful for school-based educators who aspire to enact culturally responsive instruction (McDonald et al., in press). It is interesting to note that details about this kind of collaboration are often missing in literature on culturally responsive

instruction. There are exceptions (e.g. Moll & González, 1995), but some of the best-known examples of responsive teaching in literacy and language arts focus almost exclusively on the instructional efforts themselves (i.e. Au, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lee, 2007). Authors have frequently recommended that teachers learn about children and communities and create curriculum and instruction that is responsive (e.g. Gay, 2002), but offer few cues about *how* teachers might go about learning about children and communities in the first place. This research suggests that connecting and collaborating with organizations outside of school, and inquiring through observation and discussions with community-based educators, is a potentially valuable approach for learning about students' resources and participation.

Collaborating with Gloria influenced the study in other ways, as well. For example, her input invoked wider consideration of learning goals for the project. Gloria seemed at least as interested in students' developing leadership skills and dispositions through this intervention as she was in academic growth. Initially, I was mainly interested in the ways in which this project could support students' academic achievement, and Gloria's insights prompted me to attend to students' dispositional learning and leadership, as well. This represents a glimpse of how diverse voices from communities, those often excluded from education-related decision making, can expand our vision of purposes, values, and goals for educating children in U.S. schools (Zeichner, 2010).

***Educative contexts.*** Findings from this study reaffirm evocations for educators and researchers to think broadly about learning contexts for language and literacy development and culturally responsive innovation. Out-of-school quality teaching and learning opportunities may be especially important and strategic for language minority students. Emerging bilinguals and

English learners have greater demands in U.S. schools than their monolingual English counterparts; they must learn grade level content while also learning conversational and/or academic registers of English (Walqui, 2010). This research shows that creatively and strategically utilizing time after school can be a key element in a larger effort to more equitably support ELs.

Considering the significant constraints that schools face in today's climate (especially schools in high-poverty areas), many would argue that there are limited opportunities for school-based culturally responsive instructional innovation. Out-of-school learning contexts face constraints, as well (e.g., tight budgets, funding increasingly tied to evidence of academic gains), but they also negotiate fewer curricular and assessment mandates, and thus may have greater license for innovation. Further, whereas schools have historically been sites for assimilation, community-based organizations that work with immigrants and their children have tended to promote integration, a philosophical approach that better suits culturally responsive instruction.

That said, I do not advocate for circumventing schools in this work. Rather, I argue for a wider and comprehensive effort—one that looks within and beyond schools, and one that creatively, genuinely, and simultaneously responds to students' repertoires of practice (including the values these espouse) *and* responds to the strong desire in communities for high levels of achievement for their children. The time I have spent in schools and community-based organizations prompts me to believe that there are strong examples of culturally responsive instruction already happening during and after school. It is important for researchers to investigate existing efforts while theorizing additional innovations. Interestingly, the analysis of partner reading transcripts and video in this study suggested that students themselves learned to

provide culturally responsive instruction to their partners, as they incorporated kindergarteners' background knowledge and language resources in the service of understanding and discussion text. In fact, because of their closer perspectives and linguistic knowledge, students may be exceptionally well equipped to engage in culturally responsive instruction. Paradigms that consider this potential should be included in further empirical efforts, as well.

**Literacy education.** This study also builds on prior findings in literacy education literature, and points to numerous implications for literacy teaching, learning, and research. I bound this part of the discussion by focusing on three areas: cross-age tutoring in reading, dialogic reading, and language development.

***Cross-aged reading/tutoring.*** This research reaffirmed the generally positive effects of cross-age tutoring already established in literature. This study also adds knowledge to this area in a number of ways. Most previous research on cross-aged reading has focused on tutees' learning (e.g., Taylor, Hanson, Justice-Swanson, & Watts, 1997) with some exceptions (e.g., Jacobson, Thrope, Fisher, Lapp, Frey, & Flood, 2001). In this study, I closely examined learning of both older and younger groups. The intervention showed benefits for young students' listening comprehension, oral language production, engagement, and older students' comprehension, fluency, decoding, efficacy and self-efficacy in facilitating dialogic reading, engagement, and conceptions of reading.

Also, given that literature on cross-aged reading efforts is predominately focused on outcomes, this study contributes a much-needed, fine-grained investigation of process (Roscoe & Chi, 2007). It is interesting that research on such an inherently interactive approach has largely concentrated on personal plane investigation—typically pre/post literal comprehension

assessment for individual children. As in prior research, I was able to address the question “What is the impact on students’ performance?” However, my conceptualization of impact was more comprehensive than many other studies in this area, as I looked for impact-related evidence in observations, interviews, and the interactive reading sessions in addition to pre/post reading assessments in the analysis. Because of the extended set of data sources, this research qualitatively engaged the less frequently asked question “What is happening during cross-age reading?” This approach also allowed for consideration and investigation of variation across cases. In relationship to positive but variable personal outcomes for students, I was able to explore the question “Why?” by closely analyzing interpersonal distinctions. This allowed for the identification of key features (i.e. question clusters, scaffolding, affirmations) that correlated with enhanced discussion around text. These findings can inform teaching efforts. For example, educators can emphasize these features as they teach students to effectively orchestrate and elicit meaningful talk. More research could contribute to the cataloging of high-leverage discussion moves that are most effective in cross age reading for different groups of students.

A common cross-age tutoring format positions younger students as readers, and older students as guides who support tutees as they decode books (Roscoe & Chi, 2007; Topping & Bryce, 2004). I opted to have older students do the reading in this project because this most closely reflected what was already in place at La Unidad, and I wanted the older students to work with texts that were sophisticated enough to interest them. Also, some kindergarten students were not yet reading, and the learning focus for them was on listening comprehension and language development. Further research that explores other arrangements of cross-age tutoring could reveal benefits and limitations of alternative reading formats.

Research on alternative age differential groupings would also be interesting. In post-intervention interviews, the 5<sup>th</sup>-grade students shared that they thought they would have had more interesting conversations with slightly older students (although they also thought that older students may not have cooperated with them as much). Training opportunities were somewhat limited in this study, and other preparation formats that are longer, more intensive, and especially those that more centrally include younger students should be explored in future research.

It was interesting that the dialogic patterns continued for cross-aged pairs and pairs of younger students after the intervention, but did not continue with pairs of older students. In an attempt to engage the value and pattern of older students helping, mentoring, and supporting younger students, I put a lot of emphasis on the teacher role in my time with older students. While there were certainly advantages to positioning older students in leadership roles, I believe this may have inhibited their dialogic participation in same-age pairings. In future efforts, it would be interesting to explore the benefits and limitations of same-age pairings or small groups, as it seems as if those arrangements would also be congruent with patterns, values, and practices at La Unidad.

***Dialogic reading.*** This research contributes to existing knowledge on dialogic reading, an approach that has shown positive effects on emerging readers' learning, but has typically been studied with adults, not elementary students, situated as facilitators. Young students' gains in listening comprehension, oral language production and their heightened interest demonstrated that the most commonly heralded benefits of dialogic reading for emerging readers were realized (Beimiller, 1999; Hargrave & Sénéchal, 2000; Whitehurst et al., 1994;). Findings from this study

suggest that intermediate students are not only able to learn to facilitate high-quality (and in some cases, bilingual) dialogic reading with young children, they also benefit from the process.

There are similarities between cross-age tutoring and dialogic reading research, and thus this study contributes to knowledge on dialogic reading in some of the ways already mentioned in the section above. For example, much of the research on dialogic reading has focused squarely in the personal plane, examining young children's pre and post performances on early literacy tests, whereas this study additionally examines the dialogic reading interpersonal *process* over time, and considers its orientation in the sociocultural activity of a particular learning setting. Approaching the implementation of dialogic reading with consideration to the broader context illuminated the appropriateness of dialogic reading as a method at La Unidad, which I believe was critical for take-up and sustainability.

Findings from this research corroborated prior studies on literacy learning arrangements that position students as teachers, such as reciprocal teaching (Palincsar & Brown, 1984), and those that require students to question text (e.g., Questioning the Author, literature circles, Grand Conversations, reciprocal teaching,) (Beck et al., 1997; Daniels, 2006; Eeds & Wells, 1989; Palincsar & Brown, 1984). The process of planning for and then guiding discussion prompted older students to read differently, with a more metacognitive focus. Students did not read more than they usually did at La Unidad, but the change in the *purpose* of reading may have led to growth in decoding, fluency, and comprehension, conceptual understandings of reading, and engagement. Just as young students seemed to benefit from having an individual and responsive listener, older students benefited from the process of one-on-one, dialogic deliberation of word and text meanings.

Given the findings that showed older students' collaborative reflections aided their learning, further exploration about dialogic reading reflection arrangements is warranted. Building on findings in this study, perhaps more intentional processes and groupings could be established. For example, it would be interesting to strategically pair low-level comprehenders with more proficient comprehenders to plan and reflect. This could be an advantageous format particularly if staffing arrangements do not allow for oversight or guidance from a teacher.

***Language development.*** Decades of research shows the central role of language development in literacy learning (Genessee et al., 1994; Hart & Risley, 1995; Heath, 1983). Language was of central importance in this context and in this study. All ten participants showed linguistic growth. There were four main types of language acquisition/learning opportunities for younger students. In one case, a Spanish-dominant kindergartener had the opportunity to practice using her second language (English) with intensive scaffolding from a proficient (and monolingual) English speaker/reader. Other Spanish-dominant children were able to discuss texts (read in English or Spanish) in Spanish with their bilingual partners; this gave them greater access to text meaning, greater access to conversation, and greater access to key academic vocabulary that they can eventually transfer to English. English-dominant young students had many opportunities to increase English academic language knowledge with English-speaking partners. An English-dominant kindergartner paired with a bilingual student learned several Spanish words from his bilingual. While varying, each of these types of L1/L2 arrangements has been found to be valuable for early literacy learning when effective scaffolding is in place (August & Shanahan, 2006; Slavin & Cheung, 2005).

Linguistic development over time was evident: both the younger and older student groups utilized more sophisticated language in their partner reading sessions. They used high frequency

and low frequency words from the text, as well as other language that was generally more academic than language they used conversationally. Throughout this dissertation, I highlight that the cross-age dialogic reading arrangement afforded one-on-one, in-the-moment, responsive scaffolding. The findings suggest that the many opportunities students created and seized in their discussions to deliberate and discuss words was especially effective for academic language development of both older and younger students. This represents an interesting contribution to research on the kinds of instruction that best promote academic language learning (Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010). I was struck by older students' reports of increased self-efficacy in Spanish literacy practices. Such trends imply the potential of cross-age dialogic reading as a tool for home language (L1) maintenance and development.

Because language was such an emphasis, further research that utilizes additional language assessment instruments would be helpful. There may have been growth experienced by students in the study that was not documented. For example, the reading inventories used to assess older students' literacy proficiency were only in English; this could have excluded gains in Spanish literacy that the project may have facilitated for older students who read and/or facilitated dialogic reading in Spanish. Also, almost all older students (in English and/or Spanish) focused heavily on the teaching and learning of vocabulary words during their reading sessions; a more comprehensive assessment battery that includes vocabulary measures could also help illuminate what cross-age (bilingual) dialogic reading affords as an L1 and L2 *academic language* learning method specifically.

**Implications for schools and schooling.** Although this study was conducted in a community-based organization, it has several implications for schools and schooling. First,

utilizing Rogoff's framework can be helpful for examining and designing learning experiences in school contexts; this applies to educators as well as researchers. The framework demands that we recognize how the arrangements/contexts we design shape classroom literacy interactions and individuals' learning opportunities. In this vein, this research prompts us to think about facilitating opportunities for students to read for meaningful and authentic purposes (Au, 1994). When students in this study read and listened to reading with a heightened sense of purpose, interpersonal and personal learning outcomes improved. What other arrangements (or rules) can teachers and schools utilize that may engender a similar kind of focus and intentionality from students as they read?

It is not unusual for schools to have "learning buddies," where students in an intermediate-grade or middle-school class are paired up with students in a primary class, and occasionally or regularly meet up for some sort of shared activity. This is the school-based model that perhaps best aligns with the intervention in this study. But while "learning buddies" may be popular, in practice this model is not always very thoroughly conceptualized or well utilized. Findings from this research illustrate the potential impact cross-age arrangements hold. "Learning buddies" or "reading pals" time should be used strategically. It is possible that some of the activities used in the intervention could be fruitful for supporting metacognitive the activities in which buddies engage can and should include high-leverage learning opportunities. Dialogic reading is one possibility. Language and relational resources should be considered when orchestrating the pairings.

Another implication for schools relates to the work of supporting language minority students. Some schools, districts, and states claim to hold bilingualism and biliteracy—as

opposed to only English learning—as goals for education, yet based on instructional paradigms and resources, in practice it appears as if English learning alone is the clear and dominant value. If we are serious about the goal of biliteracy for our emergent bilingual students, we need to implement arrangements that will foster oral language development (including academic language development) and reading in students' home language(s).

Resources are scarce as most districts currently face deep budget cuts for education; this research points to the potential effectiveness of utilizing linguistic resources (and perhaps relational resources) that already exist among bilingual children across grades. Findings from this study indicate that in schools with populations of students who share linguistic backgrounds (i.e., students who are from mostly Spanish-speaking families), older students may be able to leverage their language resources in the service of promoting language and literacy development (for younger partners and themselves). In highly diverse schools where there are dozens or more home languages represented and in mostly homogenous schools with a small number of language-minority students, there may not be adult staff who speak the home languages of all students. In these cases, it could be strategic to orchestrate meaningful cross-age exchanges between students who share linguistic knowledge. This research provides ideas about frameworks and activities that could potentially benefit older and younger students.

Another implication born from this research relates to teacher learning. How can preservice and inservice school teachers learn to implement this type of culturally responsive instruction? Innovation and research is needed to explore this question. One step in this effort is the articulation of the discrete practices involved in this work (Ball, 1999; McDonald et al., in press). This study contributes several general steps to consider. This effort required (1) building

connections and relationships with students and with adults who knew them and their out-of-school practices and contexts well; (2) utilizing Rogoff's framework to inquire about students' strengths, resources, funds of knowledge, capital, participation patterns (this was done outside of school in this case, but this kind of inquiry can happen with students in a classroom via observation, journals, and interviews); and (3) collaboratively designing instruction that utilized and built on the strengths, etc. identified in the inquiry. This is very similar to the process put forth by Moll and González and colleagues (1992; 1995) in their funds of knowledge work, but does not necessarily include home visits, and has a stronger focus on participation patterns than specialized content connections.

### **Additional Considerations**

I have mentioned a number of limitations of this study throughout this chapter and dissertation. There are several other considerations that need to be taken into account alongside this study's findings and implications. As with qualitative case study research in general, findings in this study cannot be assumed to generalize to other contexts, especially those that are quite different from La Unidad. Rather, as I have explained in this chapter, there are ways in which the findings generalize to theory, especially sociocultural theory and the areas of culturally responsive instruction, cross-age tutoring, dialogic reading, and language development.

The sample in this study was relatively small. A small sample was necessary to reach the level of depth desired for my purposes, but similar studies with larger samples are warranted. A larger sample could bolster analysis of different language groupings. Within the group of five pairs, there were even smaller samples of L1/L2 and language dominance pairings. For example, Karina/Armando and Teresa/Liana were the only pairs regularly utilizing Spanish, but with other

factors (i.e. age differential, family crises) it is difficult to understand the potential of this language pairing (bilingual older student with Spanish-dominant younger student) more generally. More cases would help reveal themes about this and other types of language pairings. A sample large enough to merit a test of significance with normed reading tests would more sharply illuminate certain types of outcomes, particularly if there were a control group. I would not advocate for this exact model to be transferred to other settings without careful consideration of contextual fit; but it is possible that the general model would be appropriate for another context with a larger student population, which could provide a sample size large enough for significance testing.

An analytic challenge was that I was not able to account for the extent to which other factors may have influenced outcomes. Students had instructional opportunities at school and had other literacy experiences over the course of the project, and these could have contributed to students' gains. There were other potentially influential factors within the Unidad site (and even within the intervention activities), which make it difficult to attribute outcomes. For example, Gloria noted that students were excited about having new books in the mix at La Unidad. Also, students enjoyed using the audio recorders. The recorders may have acted as learning tools as well as research tools; having an additional "audience" could have spurred students' additional focus, motivation, and/or accountability. There were no recorders used during the post-intervention observations and many of the interaction patterns from the project held. This suggests that students were capable of enacting dialogic reading without recorders. However, that does not necessarily prove that the recorders played no role in students' improvement; I cannot determine whether or not the dialogic reading strategies would have become habitual for students if they had not used recorders during the length of the intervention.

In interviews, Gloria expressed her gratitude for having another adult in the room who could give additional attention to small groups of students. This change in the adult/student ratio at La Unidad could have also contributed to students' growth. The newness or novelty of the project (and my presence) could have sparked a surge in students' interest and performance. For this reason, more research is needed in which there are fewer novel factors. If trainings were conducted by a regular staff member, for example, and if students were already used to using recorders at the start of the project, we could better understand the contributions of various factors. I recognize that my specialized literacy training and teaching experience influenced the instruction I facilitated; for this reason, research in which students' regular teacher/educator implemented the instruction would be particularly illuminating.

My dual role of teacher and researcher had some benefits (i.e. deep understanding of the instructional experience), but I was also subject to bias. As mentioned, I made a concerted effort to prevent susceptibility to bias from influencing my data collection and analysis (e.g., in the phrasing of protocols, enlisting another scorer). I knew La Unidad students before the study, but over the course of the project, my relationships with them became closer. As I mentioned in the methods chapter, I made an effort to spend time with non-participants rather than participants during homework time and free time at La Unidad. This meant that my actual direct face time with participants was relatively short. Nonetheless, La Unidad is a close-knit community, and I became part of it. The difference in my relationships with participants may have impacted students' performances on reading assessments and interview responses.

## **Conclusion**

This research adds to literature on culturally responsive instruction and literacy education, and points to numerous next steps for research. Despite limitations, the positive findings related to interpersonal, personal, and institutional dimensions of learning are promising, and thus, further investigation of similar efforts is warranted. Findings from this study highlight what is possible for students, particularly language minority students, when they have access to a wide range of their resources and when they experience instruction designed to bridge their existing strengths and practices to new learning and new practices. This research also challenges educators and researchers to carefully consider a spectrum of sociocultural dimensions when designing and investigating literacy learning.

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## APPENDIX A--Observation protocols for taking field notes in CBO

I alternated between the following 2-hour protocols:

### Observation Protocol A

10 min—whole group/larger context view  
 5 min—target student 1 Older (O)  
 5 min—target student 2 Younger (Y)  
 5 min—target student 3, O  
 10 min—whole group  
 5 min—target student 4, Y  
 5 min—target student 5, O  
 5 min—target student 6, Y  
 10 min—whole group  
 [repeat]

### Observation Protocol B

10 min—whole group/larger context view  
 5 min—target student 7 Older (O)  
 5 min—target student 8 Younger (Y)  
 5 min—target student 9, O  
 10 min—whole group  
 5 min—target student 10, Y  
 5 min—target student 11, O  
 5 min—target student 12, Y  
 10 min—whole group  
 [repeat]

**For whole group:** While I observe the whole group, I will document the ordinary activity of the CBO. In particular, in my notes, I will document:

Who is there (# students, staff, parents)  
 Description of space, activities  
 How students are clustered, distributed  
 Teacher moves, learning arrangements  
 Verbatim notes of CBO teacher

**Target students:** Over the course of the study, I will follow each student participant (target student) for part of my observations each week. When focusing my observation on each target student, I will:

Take verbatim notes of his/her conversations/interactions  
 Describe nonverbal interactions  
 Document texts and language he/she used

## **APPENDIX B—Interview Protocols**

### **CBO TEACHER BEFORE INTERVENTION**

#### **Background**

1. Tell me about your work here at [CBO]. What is your role?

#### **Children's assets**

2. Tell me about the children who attend your program. (What are some of the greatest strengths/assets that [CBO] children have? What are some challenges they face?)

#### **Goals**

3. What are your goals for the program? (if literacy does not come up, ask if there are goals specifically related to reading and writing)

#### **Literacy/Language**

4. Of the daily activities at [CBO], which of those do you see as contributing to students' learning about reading and writing?
  - a. For each activity: Tell me more about that [activity]. Possible probes: How do you structure that? Why did you decide to organize it that way? What do you notice about the way children engage in [activity].
5. Tell me what you notice about language use here at [CBO].
  - a. Possible probes: What language(s) do you typically use? With whom? In what circumstances? What languages do students typically use? With whom? In what circumstances? Parents? What, if any, differences do you notice in the language use between older and younger students? To what do you attribute that difference?

#### **Perspectives on student-student interactions**

6. [CBO] serves children K-6. What is that like? Possible probes:
  - a. For the students? What is it like for you? How does that impact your work/the activities you plan? The arrangements you make?
  - b. What, if any, benefits come with having kindergartners through 6<sup>th</sup> graders in the same program?
  - c. What, if anything, is challenging about having this age range?
  - d. What do you notice about the way older and younger children interact here at [CBO]. (probe: Example? Why do you think that is a pattern here?) Are there different expectations for children depending on their age? Say more about that.

#### **Perspectives on intervention**

7. What, if any, effects do you anticipate from the cross-age partner reading project might bring? Why?
  - a. What, if anything, do you think could be challenging about this paired reading project?

- b. To what extent do you think this project is different than what is typically done?
8. Is there anything else you would like to share with me? Do you have any questions for me?

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR CBO TEACHER AFTER INTERVENTION

### Perspectives on Intervention

#### *Role*

Thinking back over the past few weeks, how, if it all, did the partner reading project change your work at [CBO]?

- Your role? To what extent was your schedule/routine the same as before the paired reading project started?

#### *Effects*

2. Tell me what you noticed about the project. Possible probes:
  - What, if anything, was challenging about the cross-age reading project? Examples?
  - Did anything stand out to you? What did you notice? (i.e. trainings, explicit instruction)
  - What do you think were some effects, if any, of the project?
  - Did anything surprise you? Examples?
  - What did you notice about language use in the interactions between students? (probe: Think of one pair of students that you observed. Describe what you noticed about their interactions during paired reading.)
3. Are there aspects of this project that you thought were more successful than others? Please explain. What would you change if you were to do this type of project again?

#### *Potential impact on future practice/structure*

4. How likely is it that you will continue to organize the types of activities involved in the intervention? Not likely, possible, likely, very likely
  - What, specifically, if anything, would you consider continuing? Why?
  - Why is it not likely?

### Interactions, expectations (more broadly than interactions during project)

5. What do you notice about the way older and younger children interact here at [CBO]?
  - Are there different expectations for children depending on their age? Say more about that.
  - How, if at all, were the interactions during the intervention like/different from interactions before?

### Goals

6. What are your goals for children at [CBO]?
  - What goals, if any, do you have that are specifically related to reading and writing? [if different than those from 1<sup>st</sup> interview, probe: What do you think may have contributed to a change in the goals that you shared a few weeks ago?]

Is there anything else you would like to share with me? Do you have any questions for me?

## **PRE-INTERVENTION INTERVIEW PROTOCOL, OLDER STUDENTS**

### **Background**

How old are you?

What grade are you in?

How long have you been coming to this community organization?

Tell me about the people in your family. Do you have brothers and/or sisters? How old are they?

Do you have any family members here in the CBO?

What language(s) do you usually speak when you are here? And at home? At school?

### **Cross-age experiences**

In [CBO], I notice that there are kindergartners all the way through 6<sup>th</sup> graders. What is that like?

- Possible probing questions:
- What is it like to be one of the older students in a group with younger students?
- What kinds of things do you do only with other older students? With all students together? With younger students? Tell me about a time that you did that [activity with younger children].

### **Reading behaviors, attitudes, conceptions**

I notice that you all have reading time here at [CBO]. Can you tell me about your reading time?

- How do you usually spend reading time here? What kind of books do you choose? Why?
- Do you choose the same kind of books when you are reading in pairs? Why/not?
- How is reading here different than reading in school? How is it the same?
- Do you prefer to read books in Spanish or English or both? Why?
- Would you say that you like to read during reading time, kind of like it, or don't like it? Why?

What is a good reader?

- Who is a good reader that you know? What makes him/her a good reader?
- Are you a good reader? Why do you think that?
- What do you think the hardest thing about reading is?
- How does someone get better at reading?

Tell me about a book that you read here this week.

Did you read it alone, with a partner? What was it about? What language was it written in? Was it easy to read or kind of hard to read? What made it easy/hard? Tell me everything you can remember about the book.

**Strategies**

What if you were reading a book and couldn't figure out what was going on in the story. What would you do?

What if another student you were reading to had a difficult time understanding a story. What would you do?

## POST-INTERVENTION INTERVIEW PROTOCOL WITH OLDER STUDENTS

### Perspectives on project

If you were asked by someone else outside of [CBO] to describe what this partner reading book talk project is, how would you explain it? How would you explain your job/role in the project?

Tell me about your reading partner. Who was it?

- What was it like to read with him/her?
- Can you describe one of the first sessions?
- Now can you describe one of the last sessions?
- Did you typically talk to your partner in Spanish or English or both? Did your partner use Spanish or English or both? Were there certain times that you would use Spanish? Why?

Would you say that you read in English/Spanish more than usual, the same, or less than usual during reading time?

[What was that like for you?]

What was your most successful session? Tell me about it. Why do you think it went so well?

What was the least successful session? Tell me about it. Why do you think it wasn't as successful as the others?

Tell me about the practice/preparation sessions.

How often did you use ideas from the training/preparation during your reading time? Never, not very much, some, a lot

### *Effects*

Do you think your partner learned a lot, a little bit, not very much, or nothing? (depending on response)  
What do you think your partner learned? Why do (what makes) you think that?

Did you learn a lot, a few things, not very much, or nothing? What, if anything, did you learn from this project?

What was hard about this paired reading project?

What, if anything, did you like about it?

Were there any times when you used some of the strategies in different places or with different people?

Now that our project is over, do you think you will stop using the strategies or continue to use the strategies? How/when/where? Why/why not?

**Reading behaviors, attitudes, conceptions**

What is a good reader?

- Are you a good reader? Why do you think that?
- What is the hardest thing about reading?
- How does someone get better at reading?
- In general, would you say that you like reading time, kind of like it, or don't like it? Why?

**Cross-age experiences**

What is it like to be one of the older students in a group with younger students? What are your relationships like with younger students?

## **PRE-INTERVENTION INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS (ENGLISH VERSION)**

### **Background**

How old are you? What grade are you in?

Tell me about the people in your family. Do you have brothers and/or sisters? How old are they? Do you have any brothers, sisters, cousins here in the CBO?

What language do you usually speak when you are here? And at home? At school?

### **Cross-age experiences**

In CBO, I notice that there are kindergartners all the way through 5<sup>th</sup> graders. What is that like?

- What is it like to be one of the younger students in a group with older students?
- What kinds of things do you do here at [CBO] only with older students? Tell me about a time that you did that (activity with older children).

### **Reading behaviors, attitudes, conceptions**

I notice that you all have reading time here at CBO.

- How do you usually spend reading time here?
- What kind of books do you like?
- Do you read books in both Spanish and English?
- Do you choose the same kind of books when you are reading in partners? Why/not ?

Would you say that you like reading time, kind of like it, or don't like it? Why?

How is reading here different than reading in school? How is it the same?

When/how do you like reading the most?

What is a good reader?

- Who is a good reader that you know? What makes him/her a good reader?
- Are you a good reader? Why do you think that?
- How does someone get better at reading?

Tell me about a book that you read here this week.

- Did you read it alone, with a partner?
- Was it easy to read or kind of hard to read?
- What made it easy/hard?

**Strategies**

What if you were reading a book and couldn't figure out what was going on in the story. What would you do?

## **POST-INTERVENTION INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS (ENGLISH VERSION)**

### **Cross-age experiences**

What is it like to be one of the younger kids in a program with older kids?

What is it like to read with older kids?

### **Reading behaviors, attitudes, conceptions**

Can you tell me about your daily reading time at [CBO]?

- Would you say that you like reading time, kind of like it, or don't like it? Why?
- How is reading here different than reading in school? How is it the same?

How/when do you like reading the most?

What is a good reader?

- Are you a good reader? Why do you think that? How does someone get better at reading?

### **Perspectives on intervention**

If someone asked you what the partner-reading/book talk project is, how would you explain it?

- How would you explain your job in the project?

Tell me about your partner. Who was it? What was it like to read with him/her?

- What did you like about your time with him/her?

What was hard about the partner work?

[if applies: I noticed that when you first started partner reading with X, you sometimes didn't look very interested in the book/reading...but in the later weeks, you looked really interested...why do you think that is?]

[If applies: Did you talk to your partner in Spanish or English or both? Did your partner use Spanish or English or both? What did you think about that? Why?]

Do you think you got better or stayed the same at partner book talk during your time reading together? Why/why not?

**APPENDIX C—Determinations for BAS 2 Overall Reading Level**

<b>Accuracy</b>	<b>Comprehension</b>	<b>Overall</b>
Independent	Independent	Independent
Independent	Instructional	Instructional
Instructional	Independent	Instructional
Instructional	Instructional	Instructional
Independent or Instructional	Frustration	Frustration
Frustration	Independent or Instructional	Frustration
Frustration	Frustration	Frustration

**APPENDIX D—Older Students’ BAS 2 performance before and after the intervention**

<b>ARACELI</b>	PRE-INTERVENTION			POST-INTERVENTION			
Passage Level (fiction/nonfiction)	Q (f)	R (nf)	S (nf)	R (f)	S (f)	U (f)	V (nf)
Accuracy	99% Ind	96% Inst	93% Inst	98% Ind	98% Ind	98% Ind	98% Ind
Self Corrections	3	2	2	2	1	2	2
WPM	121	118	97	143	123	107	129
WCPM	120	115	91	140	121	105	126
Fluency rubric score (prosody)	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
Comprehension Questions	100% Ind	83% Inst	67% Frust	100% Ind	100% Ind	83% Inst	100% Ind
Overall Reading Level for Passage	Ind	Inst	Frust	Ind	Ind	Inst	Ind

<b>MARIANA</b>	PRE-INTERVENTION			POST-INTERVENTION			
Passage Level (fiction/nonfiction)	U (f)	W (nf)	Y (f)	U (nf)	V (f)	W (f)	Y (f)
Accuracy	98% Ind	96% Inst	94% Inst	99% Ind	98% Ind	99% Ind	96% Inst
Self Corrections	4	2	2	2	1	5	5
WPM	135	121	114	127	180	138	138
WCPM	132	116	108	125	175	136	132
Fluency rubric score (prosody)	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
Comprehension Questions	100% Ind	100% Inst	67% Frust	100% Ind	100% Ind	100% Inst	83% Ind
Overall Reading Level for Passage	Ind	Inst	Frust	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst

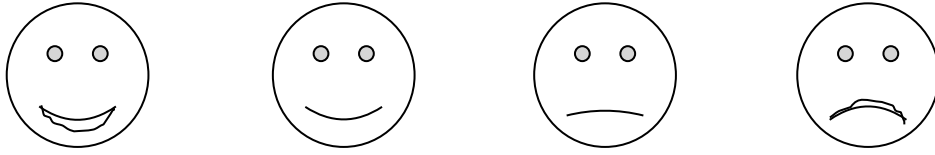
<b>HELEN</b>	PRE-INTERVENTION			POST-INTERVENTION			
Passage Level (fiction/nonfiction)	S (nf)	T (f)	V (f)	T (nf)	U (nf)	W (f)	Y (nf)
Accuracy	98% Ind	95% Inst	91% Inst	98% Ind	97% Ind	99% Ind	96% Inst
Self Corrections	1	3	5	2	3	3	5
WPM	98	110	88	94	93	92	91
WCPM	96	105	80	90	89	91	89
Fluency rubric score (prosody)	3	2	2	3	3	2	2
Comprehension Questions	100% Ind	100% Ind	83% Inst	100% Ind	100% Ind	100% Ind	100% Ind
Overall Reading Level for Passage	Ind	Inst	Inst	Ind	Ind	Ind	Inst

<b>KARINA</b>	PRE-INTERVENTION			POST-INTERVENTION			
Passage Level (fiction/nonfiction)	R (f)	S (nf)	T (nf)	R (nf)	S (f)	T (f)	U (nf)
Accuracy	99% Ind	96% Inst	96% Inst	98% Ind	98% Ind	98% Ind	97% Inst
Self Corrections	0	1	1	1	1	4	4
WPM	157	14	136	144	122	107	129
WCPM	155	140	133	140	117	105	126
Fluency rubric score (prosody)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Comprehension Questions	100% Ind	83% Inst	50% Frust	100% Ind	100% Ind	83% Inst	83% Inst
Overall Reading Level for Passage	Ind	Inst	Frust	Ind	Ind	Inst	Inst

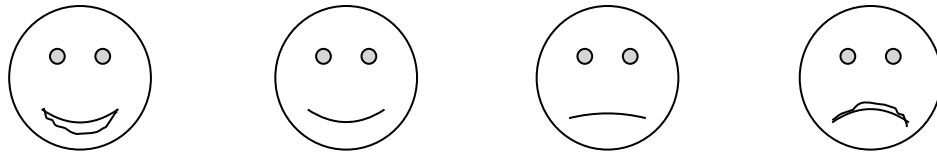
<b>TERESA</b>	PRE-INTERVENTION			POST-INTERVENTION		
Passage Level (fiction/nonfiction)	S (f)	T (nf)	U (f)	S (nf)	T (f)	V (nf)
Accuracy	97% Inst	96% Inst	95% Inst	97% Inst	96% Inst	98% Ind
Self Corrections	3	2	2	3	3	3
WPM	121	103	101	118	108	125
WCPM	120	99	96	114	104	123
Fluency rubric score (prosody)	3	2	2	3	3	3
Comprehension Questions	83% Ind	83% Inst	50% Frust	83% Inst	83% Inst	83% Inst
Overall Reading Level for Passage	Inst	Inst	Frust	Inst	Inst	Inst

**APPENDIX E—Supplemental reading attitude interview tool**

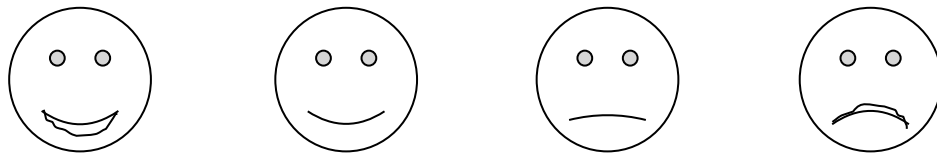
1. How do you feel when you read a book on a Saturday?



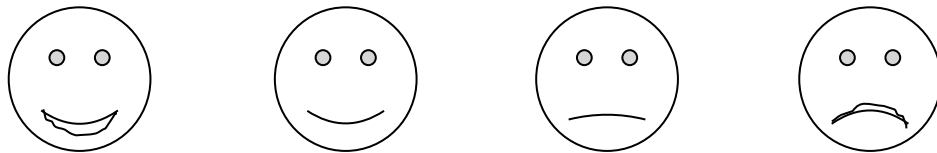
2. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?



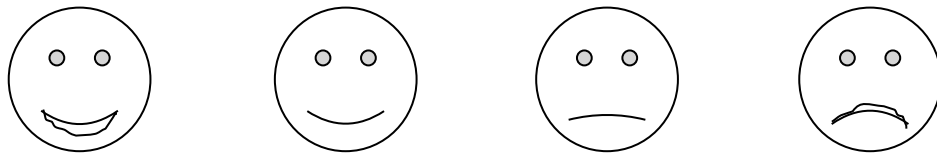
3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?



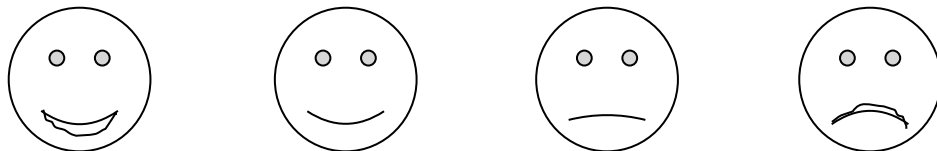
4. How do you feel about spending free time reading?



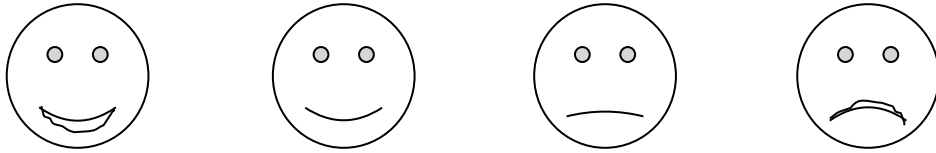
5. How do you feel about starting a new book?



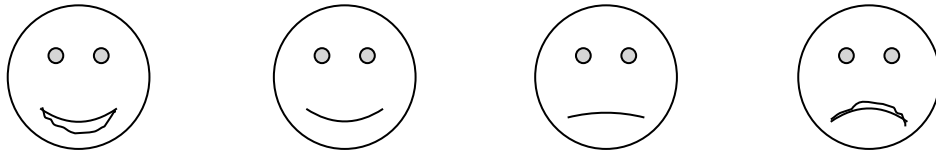
6. How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?



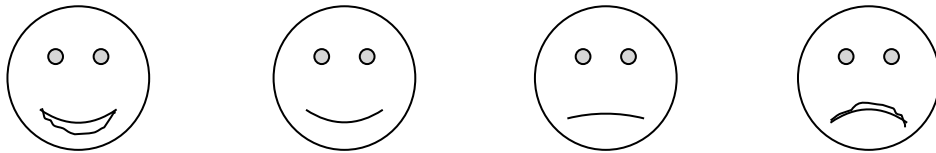
7. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?



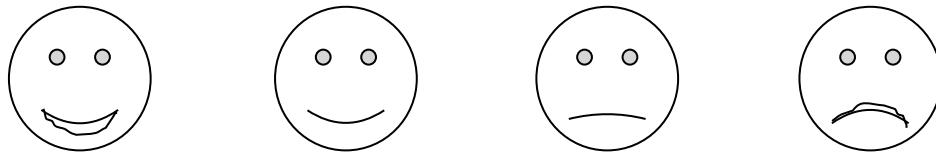
8. How do you feel when the teacher asks you questions about what you read?



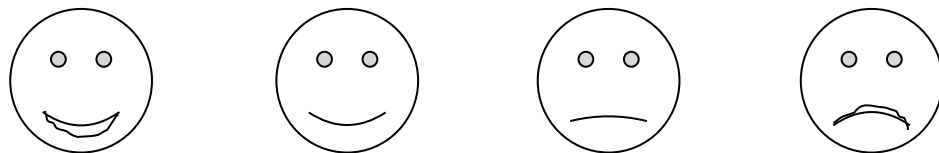
9. How do you feel about reading in school?



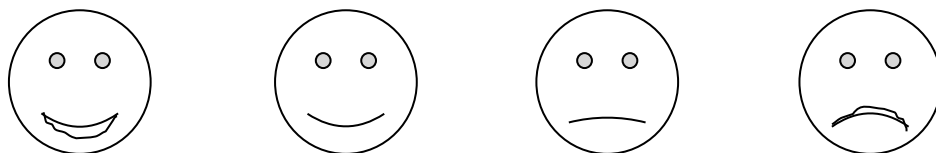
10. How do you feel about reading your school books?



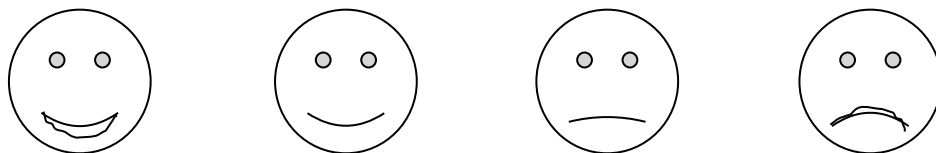
11. How do you feel about learning from a book?



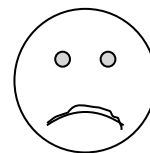
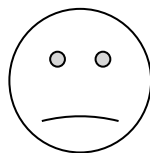
12. How do you feel when it's time for reading class?



13. How do you feel about the stories you read in reading class?



14. How do you feel when you read out loud in class?



1. ¿Cómo te sientes cuando estas leyendo un libro el sábado?
2. ¿Cómo te sientes cuando leer un libro en escuela durante tiempo libre?
3. ¿Cómo te sientes sobre la lectura para la diversión en la casa?
4. ¿Cómo te sientes sobre la lectura del tiempo libre?
5. ¿Cómo te sientes sobre comenzar un nuevo libro?
6. ¿Cómo te sientes sobre la lectura durante vacaciones de verano?
7. ¿Cómo sientes sobre leer tipos diferentes de libros?
8. ¿Cómo sientes cuando the teacher le hace preguntas acerca de lo que tu lees?
9. ¿Cómo sientes sobre la lectura en escuela?
10. ¿Cómo sientes sobre la lectura de tus libros de escuela?
11. ¿Cómo sientes sobre el aprendizaje de un libro?
12. ¿Cómo sientes cuando es hora para la clase de la lectura?
13. ¿Cómo te sientes sobre las historias leer adentro la lectura de la clase?
14. ¿Cómo sientes cuando tu lees ruidosamente (out loud) en clase?

## **KATE BRAYKO (GENCE)**

University of Washington, College of Education

Miller 412 • 509.594.6605

[katebrayko@gmail.com](mailto:katebrayko@gmail.com)

### **EDUCATION AND HONORS**

#### **University of Washington, College of Education—Seattle, Washington**

##### **Ph.D. Candidate, Curriculum and Instruction: Language, Literacy, and Culture**

- Degree cognates: Literacy Education (specialization), Teacher Education, Educational Policy, Social Issues for Children and Families
- Patrick Ho Fellow (for promising scholars dedicated to improving education for language-minority youth)
- College of Education's 2011 nominee for the Graduate School Medal, a recognition for Ph.D. candidates who integrate academic expertise and social awareness as "scholar-citizen"
- Dissertation: *Reading and Relationships: Leveraging Community Strengths in a Cross-Age, Bilingual, Dialogic Reading Intervention*  
Chair—Professor Sheila W. Valencia

#### **University of Notre Dame—Notre Dame, Indiana**

##### **Master of Education, K-8 Education**

- Chosen by peers as graduation speaker
- Degree fully funded by AmeriCorps grant

#### **Gonzaga University—Spokane, Washington**

##### **Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, English Minor**

- Trustee Scholar
- Alpha Sigma Nu Jesuit Honor Society
- NCAA Division I Academic All-Conference

### **RESEARCH WORK EXPERIENCE**

#### **2007-2011 University of Washington—Seattle, Washington**

##### ***Research Assistant, Alliance of Community Teachers***

- Collaborated with an interdisciplinary research team led by Dr. Morva McDonald to implement a community-based learning innovation in UW's Elementary Teacher Education Program; participated in engaging directors of diverse community organizations as partners in the effort of better preparing teachers for high needs schools
- Currently engaged in an intensive, longitudinal study on the impact and the implementation process of this community learning innovation; involved with study design, data collection, analysis, and dissemination of the work (presentations at local and national conferences and writing articles)

- Assist with managing grant from Ford Foundation; share in writing progress reports to funders
- Maintain relationships with community partners

**2003-2004 Tallaght West Research Initiative—Tallaght, Dublin, Ireland**

***Researcher***

- Worked with Dartington Research Group (U.K.) in conjunction with the Childhood Development Initiative of Ireland in a study that measured community needs in relation to the adequacy of social services for youth in Irish social housing projects outside of Dublin
- The report of this study, *How Are Our Kids? Children and Families in Tallaght West, Co. Dublin* (2004), continues to inform local coalitions and NGOs, as well as the Irish government

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE—HIGHER EDUCATION**

**2011-present Seattle University—Seattle, Washington**

***Instructor, Teacher Education (Master in Teaching Program)***

- Courses taught: Literacy/ELL in Secondary Content Areas, Culturally Responsive Teaching I and II, Middle School Seminar, Reflective Teaching for Social Justice
- Guide student teachers as they learn to facilitate service learning with children and youth
- Graduate advisor
- Student teacher supervisor

**2009-2011 University of Washington—Seattle, Washington**

***Instructor, Elementary Teacher Education Program***

- Courses taught: Teaching, Learning, & Assessment in Literacy
- Partnered with an elementary school (Bailey Gatzert) and a bilingual summer program (Beacon Hill International School); these courses were taught in the field, and involved designing and coordination observation opportunities and frequent direct experiences with children

**2008-2009 University of Washington**

***Teaching Assistant, Elementary Teacher Education Program (with Drs. Sheila Valencia and Anne Reece)***

- Courses: Teaching, Learning, & Assessment in Literacy I, II, II
- Orchestrated “Puzzles of Practice” critical friends group sessions during student teaching

**2007-2008 Heritage University—South Seattle Campus, Washington**

***Assistant Professor of Education***

- Courses taught: Literacy Across the Curriculum, Multicultural Education, Language Arts Methods 3-5, Language Arts for Elementary ESL Students

- Designed and taught West-B writing preparation course for ELL teacher education students
- Supported adjunct faculty with Heritage intra-net and other information technology components

**2004-2007 Heritage University—Toppenish, Washington, Yakama Indian Nation  
*Instructor (Education; Humanities) and Academic Advisor***

- Courses taught: Methods in Reading Instruction K-8, Methods in Language Arts K-2, Literacy Across the Curriculum, Diversity Issues in Education, Logic and Critical Reasoning, Literature for Children/Young Adults, Basic Writing II
- Cultivated civic engagement and service through assignments that connected students with community
- Designed curriculum for two language arts methods courses for the College of Education and all of Heritage's regional sites

**2003-2004 St. Patrick's College of Dublin City University—Drumcondra, Dublin, Ireland  
*Teaching Assistant***

- Taught seminars for first- and second-year Irish preservice teachers: The Teaching of Reading and Writing for Early Primary, The Teaching of Reading and Writing for the Middle Grades

**SELECTED TEACHING EXPERIENCE—K-12 AND ESL**

**2007 Casey Family Foundation—Yakima, Washington  
*Get SET Teacher***

- Taught a life/employment skills course for adolescents preparing to transition out of foster care

**2003-2004 Scoil an Croí Ró Naofa, Senior National School (3-6<sup>th</sup> gr. public school)—  
Killinarden, Tallaght, Co.Dublin, Ireland  
*Teacher***

- Taught sixth grade remedial mathematics and English groups, and 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade science classes
- Planned and implemented literacy support/intervention programs for struggling readers and writers
- Coached girls and boys basketball teams

**2001-2003 San Xavier School (K-8)—San Xavier Reservation, Tohono O'odham Nation,  
Arizona  
*Teacher***

- Designed and implemented student-centered reading for 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grades, and writing and science instruction for 6<sup>th</sup> grade

- Orchestrated opportunities for students to engage directly in investigating local histories and scientific phenomena, and to share their findings in a variety of ways with younger and older community members
- Differentiated instruction for a range of learning needs, linguistic backgrounds, and interests
- Constructed service learning projects involving larger community, such as trips to a homeless shelter, the community food bank, post-9-11 outreach experiences at local mosques and synagogues, and regular visits to the Wa:k Village Elder Center
- Honored by elders for coordinating publishing effort *Tohono 'Od (The Desert Is)*, a book of student poetry
- Coached volleyball and track teams

**2000-2001      *Solidaridad, English Language Program for Ecuadorian Social Justice Activists—  
Quito, Ecuador***  
*English Language Teacher*

- Taught beginning and intermediate English courses for members of various Ecuadorian social justice and human rights groups
- Translated documents—Spanish to English—for the member organizations
- Regularly visited and provided conversational English practice for inmates and inmates' children at Quito's women's prison

**OTHER TRAINING**

**2004**              Grant Writing Workshop at Heritage University, Yakima Campus

**2000-2001**      Academia Superior del Español, Simón Bolívar—Quito, Ecuador  
Intensive immersion Spanish language courses

**GRANTS**

**2011**              \$1,000 Doi Dissertation Grant from the University of Washington College of Education  
Grant funded materials and some transcription costs for dissertation work.

**2009**              \$5,000 grant from the Center of Women and Democracy  
Grant funded travel and work for the Center of Women and Democracy's international delegation to Morocco. This involved duties as the delegation's Literacy Issues Representative, including giving a talk to members of Morocco's Ministry of Education entitled *Toward Educational Equity: Rethinking the U.S. Literacy Achievement Gap*.

**2009**              \$3,500 grant (deferred) from the Office of Indian Education in Montana's Office of Public Instruction

Grant approved for a study related to Indian Education for All, Montana's state-level policy. (Note: the study was not conducted due to time and geography constraints.) The proposed study was an investigation of how IEFA-related pre-service and in-service experiences shaped teachers' engagement with and implementation of the policy in their classrooms.

**2006** \$1,000 Title V Grant  
Grant awarded for designing two courses that represented models of culturally responsive, learner-centered, college-level instruction that effectively incorporated technology.

### ACADEMIC FELLOWSHIPS/SCHOLARSHIPS

**2008** \$6,000 Patrick Ho Fellowship  
Scholarship awarded for demonstrating merit as a beginning scholar whose research is focused on educational equity for culturally and linguistically diverse children

**2001-2003** \$9,450 AmeriCorps Educational Award  
Grant awarded for AmeriCorps service; funded Master of Education degree

**1996-2000** \$40,000 Gonzaga Trustee Scholarship  
Merit-based award funded undergraduate education

### PUBLICATIONS

#### **Refereed:**

**Brayko (Gence), K.** (in press). Community-based placements as contexts for disciplinary learning: A case study of literacy teacher education outside of school. *Journal of Teacher Education*.

McDonald, M., **Brayko (Gence), K.**, & Bowman, M. (in press). Learning to see students: Opportunities to develop relational practices of teaching through community-based placements in teacher education. *Teachers College Record*.

McDonald, M., Tyson, K., **Brayko, K.**, Bowman, M., Delport, J., & Shimomura, F. (2011). Innovation and impact in teacher education: Community-based organizations as field placements for preservice teachers. *Teachers College Record*, 113(8).

#### **Invited:**

McDonald, M., **Brayko, K.**, & Kavanagh, S. (in press). Service learning, diversity, and teacher education. In J. Banks (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education*.

**Under review (refereed):**

Zeichner, K., Payne, K., & **Brayko (Gence), K.** (under review). A democratic approach to teacher education. *Harvard Educational Review*.

**Forthcoming:**

Bowman, M., **Brayko (Gence), K.**, McDonald, M., & Tyson, K. (forthcoming). Experts in relational practices: community-based educators' role in preparing high-quality teachers.

**JURIED PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS**

- **Brayko (Gence), K.** (2012, December). Leveraging Rich Contexts, Relationships, and Language Resources: A Community-Based Dialogic Reading Intervention. Paper will be presented at the Annual Conference of the Literacy Research Association. San Diego, CA.
- **Brayko, K.** (2011, December). Becoming Leaders de la Lectura: Elementary Students Facilitating Bilingual, Dialogic Reading with Young Children. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Literacy Research Association (formerly National Reading Conference). Jacksonville, FL.
- **Brayko, K.** (2011, April). Learning in and about Context: The Pedagogy of Literacy Methods Assignments in School- and Community-Based Field Settings. Paper accepted for presentation at the Annual Conference of the American Educational Research Association. New Orleans, LA.
- McDonald, M., Bowman, M., **Brayko, K.**, Rico, M., & Wilson, Z. (2011, February). Community Partnerships in an Age of Professionalization. Symposium presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. San Diego, CA.
- **Brayko, K.** (2010, December). "Some Things Kind of Came Together for Me There": Community-Based Placements as Contexts for Literacy Teacher Education. Paper presented at the National Reading Conference. Fort Worth, TX.  
\*This paper was nominated for the National Reading Conference/Literacy Research Association Outstanding Student Research Award.
- **Brayko, K.** (2010, April). Contextualized Knowledge of Communities Meets Subject-Area Knowledge: Horizontal and Vertical Expertise in Literacy Instruction. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Education Research Association. Denver, CO.
- **Brayko, K.** (2010, February). Community-Based Fieldwork and Subject-Area Teacher Education: Preservice Teachers' Experiences and Developing Conceptualizations of Literacy. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. Atlanta, GA.

- McDonald, M., **Brayko, K.**, Bowman, M., Delpont, J., Shimomura, F., & Tyson, K. (2010, February). Community-Based Field Experiences in Teacher Education: A Longitudinal Study of Partnership, Participation, and Implementation. Symposium presentation at the Annual Conference of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. Atlanta, GA.
- McDonald, M., Bowman, M., **Brayko, K.**, Delpont, J., Shimomura, F., & Tyson, K., (2009, February). Innovation and Impact in Teacher Education: Preparing Teachers to Work in High Needs Schools by Engaging with Community-Based Organizations as Partners in Preservice Preparation. Panel presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. Chicago, IL.

### INVITED PRESENTATIONS

- McDonald, M., Bowman, M., & **Brayko, K.** (2010, October). Partnerships in an Age of Professionalization. Presentation given at the Annual Bridge from School to Afterschool and Back Conference. Vancouver, WA.
- **Brayko, K.** (2010, February). Lessons on Literacy in Morocco: A Delegation Report. Presentation given at the Center for Women and Democracy's Food for Thought Speakers' Series. Seattle, WA.
- **Brayko, K.** (2009, November). Toward Educational Equity: Rethinking the U.S. Literacy Achievement Gap. Invited presentation given to members of the Moroccan Ministry of Education, university faculty, and international delegates from the Center for Women and Democracy. Mohammad V University, Rabat-Agrab, Morocco.
- **Brayko, K.** & Tyson, K. (2008, November). University-Community Partnerships: An Effort to Improve the Education of Young Immigrants. Presentation given to Belgian representatives of the US-Belgium Cultural Crossing: An International Network of Local Practitioners Serving Immigrant Communities. Chinese Information and Service Center, Seattle, WA.
- McDonald, M., Bowman, M., **Brayko, K.**, Delpont, J., Shimomura, F., & Tyson, K., (2008, October). Innovation in Teacher Education: Partnering with Community-Based Organizations in the Preservice Preparation of Teachers to Work in High-Needs Schools. Presentation given at the Annual Bridge from School to Afterschool and Back Conference. Vancouver, WA.
- **Brayko, K.** (2007, March). Seeing Your Clients as Cultural Individuals and Cultural Group Members. Presentation given at a Victims of Crime Assistance (VOCA) Conference. Yakima, WA.
- **Brayko, K.**, Root, P., & Smalley, K. (2006, October). Made in Where? Made by Whom? Wearing Injustice. Presentation given at Heritage University forum on the international garment

industry: ¡Presente! She is Here with Us: Honoring the Women who Make Our Clothing. Toppenish, WA.

- **Brayko, K**, Mason, C. & Rousculp, E. (2006, August). Bridging Text and ELL College Students: Strategies for Teaching and Comprehending Informational Text. Presentation given at Heritage University Faculty Days. Toppenish, WA.
- **Brayko, K.** (2005, August). Words and Beyond Words: Building ELLs' Writing Proficiency. Presentation given at Heritage University English Composition Faculty Days. Toppenish, WA.

### **SELECTED SERVICE ACTIVITIES**

#### **Professional**

- Ad Hoc Reviewer, *Educational Researcher*
- Reviewer, Literacy Research Association Annual Conference (Area 1-Pre-Service Teacher Education in Literacy, and Area 8-Literacy Learning and Practice in Multilingual and Multicultural Settings)
- Note-taker, National Urban District Leaders Network Retreat (focused on Common Core Standards Implementation in urban school districts)

#### **University**

- 2010-2011: University of Washington Liaison, Indian Education/Teacher Education Action Group
- 2011-2012: ELL consultant for State and National Accreditation efforts, Seattle University
- 2008-2009: Elected officer of Educators for Social Justice, a College of Education student group
- 2009, June: Planned and facilitated a forum on Social Justice in Teacher Education at the University of Washington
- 2005-2007: Served as Secretary of Heritage University's Faculty Senate (elected)
- 2004-2006: Served on Heritage University's Student Success Committee (appointed by provost)

#### **Wider Community**

- 2010-2011: Literacy consultant, El Centro de la Raza's After-School Youth Program

- 2010: Volunteer GED and English Language tutor for inmates, King County Jail
- 2007: In collaboration with other members of a Women's Justice Circle (through Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center), designed a needs assessment survey for mothers receiving DSHS support.
- 2004-2007: Worked as a consultant for Interfaith Coalition's homeless family literacy program
- 2005-2006: Worked with the Secretary of State's Office and college students across Washington as a faculty member of College Civics Committee
- 2004-2005: Assisted with naturalization efforts for residents applying for citizenship through the American Immigration Lawyers Association (this includes translating and helping residents fill out N-400 forms).

#### **PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS**

- American Educational Research Association, Divisions G and K
- Center for Women and Democracy
- International Reading Association
- Literacy Research Association