Rethinking Higher Education

Elizabeth P. Quintero
Larisa Callaway-Cole
Adria Taha-Resnick

Making Space for Storied Leadership in Higher Education

Learning with Migrant and Refugee Populations in Early Childhood and Teacher Education Contexts

Springer

Rethinking Higher Education

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Elizabeth P. Quintero
School of Education
California State University, Channel Islands
Camarillo, CA, USA

Adria Taha-Resnick
School of Education
California State University, Channel Islands
Camarillo, CA, USA

Larisa Callaway-Cole
Department of Human Development
and Family Science
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK, USA

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Multiplicities in lived experiences: Storying as a way…Forward

Quintero, Callaway-Cole, and Taha-Resnick offer us an opportunity to examine, reconsider, change, and activate a burgeoning higher education paradigm of leading in early childhood. They strongly focus on storying *with* young children, their families, and educators to purposefully influence, impact, and reshape policy, public health, and education based on peoples' lived experiences. I recognize this as a comfortable place that resonates with my own research and publication. Then, I quickly realize that my resonance leads me to wanting to write and to express some serious issues that dominate discourse and policy as tradition and as *the* continuation of the power paradigm. I believe these ideas braid well with the work herein.

Unfortunately, so many folks believe that they are making a difference and impacting change—enacting change-agency—by endangering us all with the single-story myth! Not these authors! No, they are offering us something wholly different. A reconceptualization that moves us away from current impassable mindedness. Rather, these authors recommend and show an opening to the multiplicity of stories through which we live our lives and crisscross each other's pathways. This openness offers us an abundance of consciousness that leads away from a reductionism (deduction) and the closed-down; out toward induction, to *the more.* I will explain more…

I wish to begin by addressing some important topics around the dilemma with story and policymaking as juxtaposed to the traditional ways of reducing bodies, peoples, cultures, languages, histories, and so on to numbers (Iorio & Parnell, 2018). Often, researchers have focused on the gap—gap gazing (Gorski, 2011)—as a way into problematizing what happens for young children, their learning and living, and their families inside of schools and at homelife.

The way such short stories go tend to villainize the family for forces typically outside of their control (lack of safe housing, clean water, tainted food supplies, issues of mental health, shelter, safety, and on and on). This detached and *bad thing* shadows the ecosystem that created such crushing problems. It keeps out of sight the many choices made by protagonists and people embedded in racist systems and colonizing practices along the way to cause such problems in the first place. It becomes harder to name the real villains in the storyline, but we know who they really are.

Instead, these vile and lowly problems infecting babies, children, parents, families, and wholes of society also become a way to show that we have a problem within schools with "certain populations" who are affected most. Usually, this discourse means BIPOC people. Typically, the research on people as-numbers-as-populations acts as the finger pointer and then finger wagger toward these same folks who are conveniently labeled as the downtrodden. There are so many examples of such written stories that promote the colonizers—dominate culture and privileged White folks—as the would-be saviors for those who could not pass the tests (yes, school tests as well as school-life tests built by and for Whites). And, the predicament rears its ugly head again and again, maintaining the status quo of privilege and power and keeping minoritized peoples in the margins and the borderlands of the single story.

Adichie (2009) brings to light the dangers of "a single story" and Molloy Murphy (2020) proclaims "that only by…engaging with 'a multitude of narratives,' (Moss, 2015, p. 236) can educators begin to reconceptualize the goals of early childhood education alongside children" (p. 18). I would add to Molloy Murphy's statement "alongside children" the many layers of work with families, communities, educators, and teacher educators that also respond favorably to the multiplicity of stories.

I imagine this way of braiding together many stories to be integral and interwoven with the many ways of knowing I've encountered, for example by Thao's (2006) work in Mong oral traditions, Anzaldúa's (1987) borderlands theories, the many Indigenous worldviews, Aboriginal ways of knowing, and post-colonial feminisms (recently I'm reading: Cannella & Manuelito's 2008 chapter in the Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies; Kimmerer's 2013 *Braiding Sweetgrass*; Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2015; works from The Common Worlds Research Collective; and many more). There are so many to offer a treasure-trove of counter narratives and open windows into what Urrietta (2007) illuminates as figured worlds in education.

Time and again, stories build toward a single narrative that becomes an archetype, meme, and dastardly stereotype that entraps people in its colonizing force. If we stop and pay close attention to the layered meaning in people's living stories, we find what Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) describe as "funds of knowledge." We can also tap into Yosso's (2011) "cultural assets" way of thinking. We can begin to braid the stories into strands that offer new and strong ways toward (re)turning and reauthenticating ways of knowing.

Moss (2016) reminds us that our storying research, "Allows for, indeed desires, wonder and surprise, new thinking and new understandings, research that is suffused with a relational ethos, an ethics of care, encounter, and hospitality" (p. xiv). In order to attend to this ethic of care and ethos for hospitality as these authors' work does, we turn toward what Indigenous scholars of Canada, Todd and Violet Lee (2020), ask us to consider in reciprocal relationality. I have likened their idea to Sheldrake's (2020), who has attempted to understand fungi and their relationship to the whole of our ecosystems. Sheldrake reminds us of our interconnectedness time and again, showing us how we are enmeshed in webs of life, experience, relationality, and thus

stories, a complex multiplicity of them—situating us where we find an abundance of the more, not less. As I read this book, this reciprocity is right inside…

Portland, USA Will Parnell

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Contents

1 Introduction 1
Elizabeth P. Quintero, Larisa Callaway-Cole, and Adria Taha-Resnick
1.1 2020 Context: A Global Pandemic and a Global Outcry Against Injustice 1
1.2 Dear Reader: Your Invitation to Participate 5
1.3 Conceptual and Experiential Reasons that Story Makes Space for Our Voices 6
1.4 Contexts: World Migration and Our Participants 7
1.4.1 Carrying Our Roots 7
1.4.2 Theoretical Perspectives 9
1.4.3 Evolving Findings 11
1.5 Building on Leadership Through Intergenerational Stories and Deeper Analysis 12
1.6 Leading and Learning through Story where Histories, Cultures, and Languages Meet 14
References 15

2 Storying History Through Family Literacy 19
Elizabeth P. Quintero
2.1 Sydney, Australia, 2018 December, Australian Association for Research in Education 20
2.2 The Dance Between Past and Present 21
2.3 Respecting Our Collaborators and Co-researchers 24
2.4 Intergenerational, Multilingual Family Literacy 25
2.4.1 What We Learned Together 26
2.4.2 Results of the El Paso Pilot Project 27
2.4.3 The Unexpected 28
2.5 Project FIEL—A Title VII Demonstration Project 28
2.5.1 Instructional Model 29
2.5.2 Evolution of the Bilingual Model 31
2.5.3 Curriculum Evolution... Adjustments! 32

2.6 The Poj Niam Thiab Meyuam (Mother/Child School) Duluth, Minnesota ... 33
2.7 Parent Advocacy ... 34
2.8 Promising Realities ... 36
References ... 37

3 Storying Teacher Preparation ... 39
Adria Taha-Resnick
3.1 Empowering a Diverse Workforce Through Relationships and Story ... 41
3.2 Storying in the Higher Education Classroom ... 44
3.3 "Us" Versus "Them" to "We" ... 47
3.4 Where Do We Go? ... 48
References ... 50

4 Storying Family Relationships ... 53
Larisa Callaway-Cole
4.1 Storying as a Way of Unraveling and Entangling ... 54
4.2 The Power of Being and Working *With* ... 55
4.3 Storied Snapshots of Family Life ... 57
4.3.1 The Díaz/Martinez Family ... 57
4.3.2 The Puentes Family ... 58
4.4 Cultural Values and Their Role in the Nurturing of Young Children ... 60
4.5 Leadership Through Family-Generated Agency ... 63
4.5.1 Relationships as Agentic Forces ... 63
4.5.2 Caregiving as Agentic Change ... 66
4.5.3 Remaining Informed as Agentic Change ... 67
4.5.4 Story Sharing as Agentic Change ... 69
4.6 Conclusion ... 70
References ... 71

5 Storying Co-mentoring ... 73
Larisa Callaway-Cole and Adria Taha-Resnick
5.1 Two-Gathering ... 74
5.2 Storying as Co-mentorship ... 76
5.3 Pedagogy of Vulnerability ... 78
5.3.1 Making Room for Emotion ... 79
5.3.2 Leaning into Love ... 81
5.3.3 Bringing Ourselves to the Table ... 82
5.4 Whipping up Generative Change ... 83
5.5 Relationships Onward ... 85
References ... 86

6 Storying Educational Leadership in Challenging Contexts 87
Elizabeth P. Quintero
6.1 Graduate Students Exploring Challenging Contexts 88
6.2 Combination of Personal History, Community Relationships, Activism, and New Information 89
6.3 The Beginnings of the Students' Research and Project Planning 93
6.4 Early Childhood Student Teachers in a California Program 94
6.5 Contexts, World Migration, and Our Participants 94
6.6 Glimpses of Student Teachers Learning Through Stories of Children 96
6.7 Student Teachers Preparing to Work with Migrating Families and Children 99
References 101

7 Storying Dreaming and Learning 103
Elizabeth P. Quintero
7.1 Guides for Storying: Children, Scholars, Authors, and Activists 105
7.2 Children Combining Fantasy, Reality, People, and Other-Than-Humans in Stories 106
7.2.1 Imagination and Re-turning 107
7.2.2 Re-turning: Teachers' Life Experiences as Children Influencing Them as Teachers 110
7.3 Current Stories Developing at the Border in the United States 112
7.4 Becoming Advocates for Imagination and New Ways of Making Meaning 114
References 117

8 Storying Onward 121
Elizabeth P. Quintero, Larisa Callaway-Cole, and Adria Taha-Resnick
8.1 Amplifying Voices Through Counterstory 121
8.2 Nurturing Relationships 122
8.3 Having the Potential for Building Better, Making New 123
8.4 Conclusion 125
References 126

Chapter 1
Introduction

Elizabeth P. Quintero, Larisa Callaway-Cole, and Adria Taha-Resnick

Abstract It is urgent to listen to and collaborate with people in our communities and schools who have experienced migration, exclusion, and desperation about their families' safety. In this book, our intention through the study of leadership in early childhood teacher education is to stress the importance of stories as both authentically participant-documented information and activist research methodology. We unapologetically, through this qualitative work, focus on leadership issues in early childhood while stressing the connections to other areas of work in higher education leadership. And we promote this collaboration with co-researchers who are wise with personal and communal experience in migration issues around the globe. In our unconventional way, we show that leadership in higher education is our goal, and the connections to this will become more explicit as we proceed both theoretically and conceptually. We engage with many different groups of learners, across time and places. The stories live like roots, woven together, deep underground. Our stories, too, are like this. We each come from different places, experiences, and backgrounds, yet our stories and paths have crossed, weaving us together as collaborators, and more often than not, as co-conspirators.

Now, more than ever, it is urgent to listen to and collaborate with people in our communities and schools who have experienced migration, exclusion, and desperation about keeping their families safe. Leadership from these co-researchers is currently in our communities and the relationships develop naturally and can flourish through leadership in early childhood education, family education, and all of us in the villages of our difficult times.

1.1 2020 Context: A Global Pandemic and a Global Outcry Against Injustice

Public health, social justice, education, and access to all of this are in crisis. What will we do? Regarding educational access for new students from migrating families in southern California in 2020, the coordinator of a tutoring program for refugee

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and immigrant children in public schools communicates her frustration about how the COVID-19 pandemic and school closings are detrimentally affecting our most vulnerable students. She says, "THE GAPS KEEP GROWING!" She's really talking about all the gaps—the achievement gap, the gap in the implementation of remote online teaching, the accessibility to equal education gap, the poverty gap, the health-care gap, and the serenity gap. She documents some of the children's comments as she visits families and tries to support them.

> The Internet isn't working, and my screen keeps freezing. I don't know my username or password. What time are my teacher's meetings? I have to wake up by 8:30am? What do you mean, 'school started?' My computer doesn't have any sound. The whole screen is in another language! I don't understand the assignments. My computer won't charge (M. Smith,[1] personal communication, 2020).

She explains to us that after beginning the tutoring program 11 years ago as a response to the educational challenges for refugee students, distance learning emphasized the challenges even more. She explained that many of the students are lost and their parents struggle to support learning online. The tutoring team members are working overtime to help solve each problem that arises. She says, "We won't give up" (M. Smith, personal communication, 2020).

And these challenges with online schooling are, of course, affecting our teacher education students studying to become early childhood and general education leaders. Many of our adult students (to be described in their own words throughout this book) are not privileged to have living situations where they can "work from home" to complete their university work. There are issues of connectivity, and by the way, how does one study from home or work from home when there is no home?

This urgent time in our history is about justice, and with the acknowledgment that many migrating families and refugees in our country languish in detention centers awaiting action on their asylum requests, many families in recent years have received permission to live in our cities and towns. They do their best to try to support their families and to integrate into our society. Yet they have mountains of obstacles to overcome—especially in a time of pandemic and social, racial unrest.

"Barad (2007), a feminist theorist, is known particularly for her theory of agential realism. In agential realism, realism is not about something substantialized and fixed or demarcated. Realism instead emphasizes that intra-active agentiality has real effects—effects that become ingredients in new and always also open-ended intra-active agencies" (Nielsen, 2020, para. 4).

Barad's conceptualization points directly to our complicated times in which we do need to breathe life into justice anew.

[1] Names changed to protect privacy.