

Wanting to Leave; Needing to Stay: Issues for Undocumented Mothers of Children with Disabilities

MARÍA CIOË-PEÑA
Montclair State University

ABSTRACT

In response to anti-immigrant policies, countless families are returning to their countries of origin. One immigrant community persists: the undocumented mothers of children with disabilities (CWD). Using the testimonios of Spanish-speaking Latinx mothers of emergent bilingual CWD, this study answers the question of why they stay. This study presents the reasons why these mothers would rather return to their country of origin but choose to stay in the United States to meet the needs of their children. The ways in which disability labels and monolingual placements influence their decision are shared, as well as possibilities for supporting these families.

“I try not to go anywhere [...] If I go anywhere, I’m very afraid. ... I know this is not my country, I know this is not my place, but I’ve never done anything bad and I have a special baby who needs his mother.” -Sugay (in Wiener & Kaiser Health, 2017, para. 11)

Since the 2016 presidential election, the United States (U.S.) has seen a dramatic shift in leadership and policies. The Trump administration’s role at the helm of American government has been marked by continuous assaults on minoritized populations. At the core have been claims that the ills of White America can be cured with the incarceration and deportation of undocumented immigrants, development and enforcement of immigration bans, and fiscal measures aimed at dissolving social supports for low-income people and people with dis/abilities (PWD) (Bagenstos, 2017; Villazor & Johnson, 2019). As a result, minoritized communities are exceedingly vulnerable to the loss of social resources in addition to increased racial and linguistic harassment. Although much

attention and political armament has been directed toward undocumented Latinxs and PWD, discourse around these subpopulations differs. Both groups have been framed as economic charges, but undocumented people have been framed as charges on national safety and morality (Hooghe & Dassonneville, 2018). Many PWD also experienced hardships during this time, but Latinx PWD and their families also manage fears of deportation, linguisticism, and the effects on their communities (e.g., economic depression, separations, and trauma). Changes in national policies have been particularly piercing to families from Mexico, and Central and South America, as the Trump administration has heavily targeted them through increased Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids, mass deportations, and family separations (Wray-Lake et al., 2018).

Disability rights advocates have organized around issues that impact dis/abled U.S. citizens; however, they have not taken up issues of immigration and deportation with the same fervor even though these also affect PWD. The absence of an

intersectional approach creates an exclusionary disability rights movement similar to White feminism. Lacking a national platform, most undocumented PWD have been left to fend for themselves (Asad & Rosen, 2019; Patler, 2018). This dearth of agency coupled with constant threats of deportation has led families into hiding, including those with mixed migratory status¹ (Vargas & Pirog, 2016). However, staying below the radar is not possible for the parents, particularly mothers, of children with disabilities (CWD) because of their children's academic, medical, and social needs—many of which are met in collaboration among families, social workers, school-based service providers, and medical professionals. Fading into the background is also difficult for families who primarily use Spanish to communicate because language is often used as an indicator of foreignness and criminality (Cioè-Peña, 2017a). As such, some undocumented and mixed-status families have opted to voluntarily relocate (Kleyn et al., 2016); however, some stay in the U.S., particularly undocumented families of emergent bilinguals labeled as disabled,² a subgroup of CWD, who are doubly assaulted and multiply vulnerable. Given the racist and ableist context, why do these families stay? The simple answer is that they feel as if they have no other choice. The more layered and complex answer is that they feel obligated to stay in response to their children's classifications, which often results in the suppression of their children's bilingualism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarship addressing the needs and concerns of undocumented mothers of EBLADs (MoEBLADs) is limited. As such, this review aims to share historical origins and present-day manifestations of issues that concern them: deportation and return migration.

RISE IN DEPORTATIONS

Deportation—the formal process of removing those whose presence is deemed illegal by, or detrimental to, the host society—is nearly as old as the U.S. However, current manifestations reflect a move toward immigration reform and policing started by the

introduction of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA) of 1996. At the time, the IIRAIRA was considered a strengthening of previous immigration policies. First, adding penalties for undocumented people who committed crimes in the U.S.; any noncitizen (including asylum seekers and legal residents) convicted of a crime was subject to mandatory detention and expedited deportation with limited access to judicial review (The National Immigration Forum, 2019). Second, the IIRAIRA reclassified “unlawful” entry and residence in the U.S. as a civil violation rather than a criminal offense, removing constitutional protections (i.e., due process). Last, it required undocumented people repatriate to the country of origin (COO) before a *legal* return to the U.S.

After September 11, 2001, immigration concerns were reframed from population control to national security (Detention Watch Network, 2016). As a result, the U.S. experienced rapid increases in the monitoring and policing of (un)documented immigrants and their communities. Detention and deportation rates rose exponentially, from around 200,000 annually between 1999 and 2001 to nearly 400,000 annually by 2010 (The National Immigration Forum, 2019). By 2018, 300,000 people were being deported and 850,000 were being detained at the U.S.–Mexico border (Gramlich, 2020). Deportations and detentions cannot be attributed to one administration or political party as both have been instituted under the Bush, Obama, and Trump administrations.

(IN)VOLUNTARY RETURN

Dominant discourses around immigration policy development and enforcement focus on a perceived “invasion” and its impact on public safety and the economy (Lindsay, 2018). However, migration patterns are more complicated than “one-way street” portrayals where immigrants enter and never leave. The rise in ICE raids and deportations have led many families to voluntarily return to their COO (Connolly, 2016; Kleyn et al., 2016; Mejia, 2018). Gonzalez-Barrera (2015) estimates that between 2009 and 2014, a million Mexican families, including U.S.-born children, returned to Mexico. The majority left voluntarily; only 14% reported a return initiated by deportation (Gonzalez-Barrera,

2015). The U.S. embassy in Mexico asserts that there were nearly 1.5 million U.S.-born people living there in 2019; at least 600,000 are children (Sheridan, 2019).

Return migration signals a voluntary choice on the part of the migrant but can also include individuals compelled or pressured to return because of circumstances beyond their control (e.g., family separation and unemployment) (Cruz, 2018). Fearing deportation, many undocumented parents seek fewer resources and supports for themselves and their U.S.-born children (e.g., emergency medical and prenatal care, and food subsidies), leaving them without social nets (American Civil Liberties Union, 2018; Artiga & Diaz, 2019). A survey of return migrants in the state of Jalisco, Mexico, found that the most pressing motivations were related to family concerns and reunification (Cruz, 2018; Gonzalez-Barrera, 2015). Family separation is one of the most profound and immediate consequences of mass deportations and detentions. In many cases, parents relocate U.S.-born children or children who migrated at an early age never having been educated in Latin America. Thus, although family unification is attained, it comes at a price, one often paid by the children (Cruz, 2018). Still, the possibility that a child may not adjust easily pales in comparison to the fears that incite their return (e.g., homelessness and separation) (Kleyn, 2017; Cruz, 2018).

IMMIGRATION POLICY IMPACT ON PWD

Mixed-status families' concerns regarding discrimination toward undocumented immigrants are magnified for undocumented PWD and undocumented caregivers of PWD and CWD. For this community, deportations and family separations mean loss of critical services and supports (Rodríguez et al., 2019; United Nations Disability and Child Rights Groups, 2019).

Although there is room for improvement, the care PWD receive in the U.S. is often more firmly rooted in policies seeking inclusion than developing nations, like Mexico, where perspectives about disabilities (e.g., origins and manifestations) are evolving (United Nations, 2006). Home-based care is viewed as maximally inclusive but difficult to achieve in places with a high

correlation between disability and extreme poverty and limited social supports (United Nations, 2006). Thus, access to home-based care is often tied to one's disability category, needs, and local resources (Disability Rights International, 2014; Rodríguez et al., 2019). According to Disability Rights International (2014), PWD placed in institutions around the world do not receive proper care. In Mexico, those spared from institutions are still at risk for abuse and mistreatment (Ríos-Espinosa, 2020). Many families must also consider how their children's linguistic practices will help or limit access to resources in the COO (Kleyn, 2017). For these reasons, when the family of a PWD experiences a deportation, the option for the remaining members to return to the COO is not always viable. Ultimately, the threat of deportation and grave consequences of returning to nations reliant on institutionalization has led families into hiding.

As immigrants have been targeted on the basis of criminality and public resource depletion, the Trump administration has also sustained a preexisting ableist culture focused on stripping rights from PWD, often using similar claims (Cokley, 2018; Cokley & Leibson, 2018; Debonis, 2018). In addition, the U.S. Department of Education has rolled back federal protections and resources for CWD and emergent bilinguals (Jimenez & Flores, 2019). Thus, undocumented PWD and their families are subjected to multiple levels of alienation and persecution.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study's intersectional framework illuminates the compounding oppressions endured by Latinx undocumented mothers in the current anti-immigrant and anti-Mexican/Latinx context permeating U.S. politics and culture. This framework centers disability critical race theory (DisCrit) as it "aim[s] to more fully account for the ways that racism and ableism are interconnected and collusive normalizing processes" (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013). Extending Crenshaw's (1991) work on intersectionality, DisCrit looks at the particular marginalization of people whose bodies are both racialized and pathologized. DisCrit presents a distinct perspective with which to understand

how policies impact doubly marginalized people in ways that are distinct from those who identify, or are identified, as white PWD and able-bodied people of color, respectively. This is extended here to include how linguistic expressions and immigration status impact Latinx mothers caring for CWD in ways that further augment their oppression.

The second theory enacted in this framework is Skutnabb-Kangas's (2005) Linguistic human rights (LHR) which frame language rights as human rights, shifting home language education out of the dismissible realm of "wants" and "niceties" to the authoritative platform of rights and duties. Embedded in LHR is an understanding of how language policies within governments and schools contribute, passively and actively, to linguistic genocide (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002, pp. 115–156). Herein, this theory is also used to understand how monolingual English placements for the children of immigrant mothers' limit their social and economic mobility. LHR indicates how issues regarding language(s) of instruction extend beyond schools, impacting the social and familial lives of students, especially EBLADs in mixed-status, transnational families.

METHODS

This study centers the narratives and experiences of three undocumented Mexican MoEBLADs. These mothers were part of a larger ethnographic project focused on the experiences and perspectives of disability, bilingualism, and motherhood of Spanish-speaking Latinx MoEBLADs in grades 2–6 in Sunset Park, Brooklyn in New York City (NYC) (Cioè-Peña, 2018). During that larger study, mothers expressed concerns and fears related to their children rooted in their own undocumented status. The experiences of these mothers are significant, given that more than 64% of those deported in 2017 were Mexican nationals. Thus, Mexicans have sharply felt the ramifications of deportations and detentions. The three mothers were married at the time and originated from rural areas in Mexico but had varied education levels, time in the U.S., settings and classifications for their children, and transnational, mixed-status family makeup (Table 1).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study focused on three questions: (1) What factors motivate undocumented women's migration decisions? (2) Do their children's classification(s) and linguistic practices play a role in those decisions? And (3) Are intersectional framings of language and dis/ability present in their discourse?

DATA COLLECTION

Data arose from case studies' interviews: one grounded in participatory rank methodology (PRM) (Ager et al., 2010) and two semi-structured follow-ups. PRM is traditionally used in public health and is rooted in three components: pile, rank, and meaning (Ager et al., 2010). In PRM, participants answer a prompt by developing a list (pile), organizing it in order of importance (rank), and discussing their ranking decisions (meaning). During this interview, each mother listed her responsibilities and ranked them by the order of importance. Next, they explored and listed their worries and concerns. I asked them to organize the list in the order of intensity from most to least concerning. Then, we discussed the list focusing on how the worries impact their abilities and experiences as a mother. I asked each mother probing questions regarding her child's disability, bilingualism, and overall education. Subsequent interviews expanded on concerns shared regarding fear of deportation, marital strife, caretaking, and financial pressures. All interviews were one-on-one and took place shortly after the presidential election, at a local church, or participants' homes in NYC, which was a designated sanctuary city.

I approach the narratives as *Testimonios* which have a long-standing history in Latin American politics and activism, and critical theory. Testimonios are grounded in the understanding that storytelling is an intentional and political act (Acevedo, 2001; Beverley, 2009; Huber, 2009; Bernal et al., 2012). Testimonios tie into the criticality embedded in DisCrit and LHR, centering and privileging the speaker's language and autonomy above that of the audience, thus honoring and recognizing the intentionality, impetuosity, and risks taken by the mothers to share these stories.

Table 1

Demographics for Participant Mothers and Children

Name and Age (years)	Number of Children	Highest Level of Education	Years in U.S.	Child and Age (years)	Grade	Disability Classification
Paty, 40	4 (two in Mx; two in U.S.)	Primary school	11	Dan, 10	5	ADHD/learning disability
Maria, 34	2	Professional degree	10	Justin, 8	3	Autism
Ana, 36	2	Primary school	12	Maria Teresa, 7	2	Speech language impairment

DATA ANALYSIS

Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and interpreted using content and narrative analysis (Riessman, 2008). I also analyzed field notes taken during, and memos written immediately after, the interviews. Initial analysis focused on ideas/phrases relating to motivations for migrating to the U.S.; how language, disability, and school were discussed; and finally, free listening for interesting comments, contradictions, or inconsistencies. The findings were then organized thematically around the possibilities and limitations of return migration for these mothers. These findings were organized into two groups: reasons to return and reasons to stay. Findings were confirmed through member checks.

POSITIONALITY

I identify as a neurodivergent, Afro-Dominican, Spanish-English bilingual/biliterate immigrant. After immigrating to the U.S. in 1990, I lived in Sunset Park for over 20 years. I was a bilingual education student and later bilingual special education teacher in the community. I attended the same schools as many of the participants' children and attended the same church. At the time of this study, I was engaged in community organizing around the local ramifications of a Trump presidency and was pregnant with my second child. Many of the mothers knew people who knew me through these roles. The mothers and I remain in close contact.

FINDINGS

I organized the findings around three themes: reasons mothers wanted to return to Mexico; reasons

they wanted to leave the U.S.; and finally, reasons they felt they needed to stay—on account of disability and language. The original Spanish quotes, without correction, are intentionally used in this article to center the mothers. Segment translations are shared within the analysis of each excerpt with full translations included at the end.

LIFE WOULD BE SIMPLER, BETTER

Much of the discourse around immigration centers notions of immigrants moving to the U.S. in search of a better life, but the mothers in this study unilaterally agreed that their lives would have been better in Mexico. This is not to say the mothers did not recognize that they would likely have fewer resources there. They do. Still, as Ana explains, many believe that this would be mitigated by their ability to lead emotionally healthier lives:

[a] Por un lado, seríamos más felices, yo creo que ahí, porque no habría tanta preocupación en los gastos. [...] Si [mi esposo] no trabaja todo el día, pues no alcanza para la renta, para otras cosas que hacen falta. Entonces, si nosotros estuviéramos en nuestro país, [...] trabajaríamos en el campo. Si bien se da la cosecha o si bien sale lo del gasto de la siembra, y si no. Pero, pues no habría tanta preocupación, porque la preocupación de aquí más alto -por mi parte, por nuestra parte, de yo y de mi esposo y yo creo que igual de las otras familias- es la renta, porque se va todo ahí en la renta. [...] Ese es lo que yo veo que aquí uno se estresa por los gastos de la renta, más aparte de otros gastos pequeños, luz, gas, todo eso, transporte. Y en

nuestro pueblo tal vez no tendríamos tanto esos gastos, pero por lo menos nuestra casa, aunque sea de cuatro paredes tendríamos, no diremos tantos gastos como las de aquí, pero sí podríamos sobrevivir.

Here, Ana shares how her life in the U.S. is filled with financial stress; her husband has to work constantly, limiting their cohesiveness as a family. Ana also recognizes that in Mexico they may have to live a simpler, more modest life—working hard “en el campo [*in the countryside*]” and living in a small home with just “cuatro paredes [*four walls*]”—but their overall quality of life would be greater because they would feel at ease and more grounded as a family. The notion of a better family life also applied to having access to extended family members which would greatly improve the women’s abilities to be mothers and to find balance. Maria who is in an admittedly abusive marriage finds that this would have been different for her in Mexico:

[b] Bueno, yo si me hubiera casado, pues tal vez, a lo mejor la pareja que yo hubiera tenido pueda que a lo mejor me pudiera haber ayudado un poco más a mí. Y si hubiera sido madre soltera, igual yo hubiera contado con el apoyo de mi mamá.

Here, María considers how her life could have been different, better. In this excerpt, she considers how in Mexico she would have had the opportunity to choose a different “pareja [partner]” one that “pudiera haber ayudado un poco mas [*could have helped a bit more*].” But even without a partner, Maria believes that as a “madre soltera [*single mother*],” she would have been able to count on “el apoyo [*the support*]” of her mother who remains in Mexico. In the end, her capacity to leave her abusive partner would have been greater because she would have had a social net to support her, something she lacked in the U.S.

This tie to abusive partners was a common theme among the participants, the leading reasons cited for remaining in these relationships were the lack of family support and financial security. The combination of these factors may be why the prospect of divorce was one of the frequently mentioned benefits of returning to Mexico. Paty,

who on several occasions attempted to leave her husband while living in the U.S., believed that she would have greater capacity to be a single parent in Mexico because she would be able to independently provide for her children, something she could not afford to do with her modest salary as a housekeeper in the US: [c] “a veces le digo a mi esposo, ‘Yo no sé si siguiéramos juntos’ [...] yo seguiré apoyando a mis hijos en lo que yo pueda y quizás separarme, pero siempre estar con mis hijos.”. In contrast, in Mexico many of these women, like Maria, had access to better employment and educational opportunities:

[d] [...] creo que ya, hace tiempo, yo me hubiera yo ya dejado de él. Y sería diferente, tal vez sería mejor, digo, porque tendría yo el apoyo más de mi mamá y de mi familia, porque allá en México tengo a toda mi familia. Entonces yo creo que me sería más fácil. Y conseguirme un trabajo, porque yo terminé mi carrera. Yo estudié licenciatura en informática, terminé. Yo ya estaba yo consiguiendo una plaza para trabajar como maestra de computación. [...] solo que tuve que dejar todo para venirme acá con mi esposo. [...] si yo hubiera tenido esa plaza, yo estuviera trabajando allá en una escuela, y dedicarme, yo creo que yo sola, porque yo en ese tiempo no estaba embarazada, yo me vine a embarazar al año aquí. [...] sería diferente mi vida si yo me hubiera quedado en México.

In this vignette, Maria states that had she stayed in Mexico she could have pursued her “carrera [*career*],” putting her studies to work. She would not have had children with her current partner because she would have had the social support and financial independence needed to leave her abusive partner “ya que tiempo [*ages ago*]”.

Although many of these women’s stories can be understood as them having a better life in hindsight, they, like Ana, also believe that they could have a better life if they returned now:

[e] Bueno, allá en México también comeríamos sin nada, porque no tenemos nada también. Que sí, por un lado, seríamos más felices porque estamos en nuestro país, y los

niños conocerían donde nosotros crecimos, nuestras raíces, y creo que eso es todo.

Ana admits that returning to Mexico now would mean starting over: “comenzariamos sin nada [*we’d start with nothing*]” but still, they would be in their “pais [*country*]” and their children would get to know their “raíces [*roots*]” which would be enough to make them “felices [*happy*].”

In this section, the mothers offer a powerful counter-narrative to discourses of immigrants entering the U.S. in search of handouts or escaping their COO. These mothers indicate their initial intentions to stay in the U.S. for short periods and begin to reveal how their lives as immigrants in the U.S. are not better than their lives in Mexico. To the contrary, many believe that, although simpler, their lives would have been filled with independence, family support, and acceptance.

SEPARATION, FEAR, AND ABUSE AT THE INTERSECTION OF MULTIPLE IDENTITIES

These mothers, like Paty reveals, planned to come to the U.S. for a short period of time:

[f] Yo y mi esposo habíamos planeado que dos años. Le digo “¿Cómo en qué tiempo haremos la casa?” Dice “Si tú llegas y trabajas y yo trabajo, en dos años ya hicimos la casa.” Y yo estuve de acuerdo, dije “Sí.” Y, sí, llegamos a los tres meses empecé a trabajar, él casi luego empezó a trabajar.

Paty’s original plan for a short trip was mitigated by many factors: if she and her husband came to the U.S. together, they would raise money for a house in Mexico faster, but more importantly, a short trip would reduce the time she would be separated from her two young children:

[g] Mis hermanos, ellos ya estaban--, tienen más años acá y le dijeron “No cuñado. Mejor vénganse los dos. [...] Tanto a ella como para ti son mejor.” “Pero es que mis hijos.” “Pero los niños se pueden quedar con mi mamá.” Entonces ellos hablaron con mi mamá. Mi hermana habló con mi mamá, y luego nosotros también hablamos con ella. Y mi

mamá estuvo de acuerdo. “Y si se van los dos váyanse. Yo me hago responsable de los niños. Pero si se van los dos. Es mejor--.”

However, the length of Paty’s trip changed when “al año [...] o antes del año salgo embarazada de [Dan] [*at a year or less than a year later [she] became pregnant with Dan*]. Things were further complicated when Dan was diagnosed with health-related and learning-based disabilities extending her short trip by “un año, dos, tres, diez años [*1 year; 2, 3, 10 years*].”

In remaining in the U.S., Paty has had to sacrifice a relationship with her older sons whom she had not seen in over 10 years. This separation was a source of great suffering for her:

[h] Quizás no era el dinero, pero algo que le haga falta yo lo puedo ayudar [...] lo menos que sirva algo que estoy acá, porque le digo, su niñez la he perdido, no va a regresar atrás. *llanto* Y me duele mucho a veces, me duele mucho haberlo dejado.

Here, Paty discusses how she tries mothering her children from afar (e.g., providing them material goods). She uses this as justification for her continuation in the U.S. In providing for them, she hopes to add value and meaning to their separation “Por lo menos que sirva algo que estoy acá [*so that being here is at least worth something*]” because she recognizes that she has “perdido [*missed out*]” on their “niñez [*childhood*].” This awareness is a great source of pain for her, a pain she carries with her each day she remains in the US: “mis hijos que están en México, que no los puedo ver, no los puedo ayudar [*my children that are in Mexico, I can’t see them, I can’t help them*].”

It is not just the lived reality of family separation that traumatizes these mothers but also the looming threat of separation that has arisen from current immigration policies:

[i] Maria: Entonces sí se pone a pensar mucho en eso, en que este señor [Trump] no nos quiere, qué va a ser de nosotros, de los niños. Por las redadas, que luego dicen que ya hay redadas aquí. Yo a veces me pongo a pensar y digo, “Dios, si me llegan a agarrar, ¿y qué va a ser de mis hijos?, ¿con quién se

van a quedar ellos?,” Justin no lo soportaría, mi hijo. Y yo creo que sí me moriría si me llegaran a regresar sin mis hijos.

Paty. Pues sí, afecta mucho lo del presidente.[...] ¿cómo vamos a hacer?, cuando ahorita él que está sacando indocumentados. [...] porque le digo, si me mandan para mi país pues ya, *risas* yo de por sí algún día tengo que regresar [...], me preocupan mis hijos. Porque, no sé, que me los vayan a quitar por el simplemente que ellos son nacidos acá.

Ana. La preocupación que ahora está pues es la de inmigración, en caso de que lleguen a agarrar al papá o a mí, mis niños no tienen pasaporte [...]. En caso de que lleguen a agarrar a mi esposo, pues todos nosotros nos vamos, me los llevo, no los dejaría.[...] Si me agarran y me voy, yo me los llevo, porque tengo entendido que aquí pasan a mano de la ciudad, y la ciudad se los queda, si es que no hay nadie que lo reclame. Eso es mi mayor preocupación

What the mothers fear is not the act of being caught in a raid and deported, but rather the act of being separated from their children. Ana and Paty both worry that the government would “vayan a quitar [*take away*]” their children and put them in the “mano de la ciudad [*hands of the city*],” but Maria’s fear is more personal. She is not as concerned about her son becoming part of the child welfare/foster care system but rather whether she and her son would survive the separation. She states that her son “no lo soportaría [*would not stand it*]” while being more explicit in stating that she would “moriría [*die*]” as a result of having her children taken from her. This fear is a valid one, given the onslaught of family separation that is taking place not only at the border but within the community that these women live in.

The need to be with their children undergirds these mothers’ decisions to endure indignities within their home. Here, María discusses her wish to “estar sola [*be alone*]” in response to her husband’s alcoholism and resulting abuse:

[j] Yo digo, a veces mejor quisiera estar sola, así no voy a estar pensando, “Ay, ya va a venir borracho” o de verlo ahí sentado que está tomando y eso. Digo, “Bueno, si yo estoy sola

al menos no voy a estar--.” Yo sé, voy a tener más responsabilidad con mis hijos, pero pienso yo que ya voy a estar un poco mejor en cuestión de no verlo, dé lo mismo que esté haciendo.... Sola en la relación, dejarlo ya.

In her vision of leaving, María sees herself as her children’s guardian and primary caretaker: “voy a tener más responsabilidad con mis hijos, pero pienso yo que ya voy a estar un poco mejor en cuestión de no verlo [*I’m going to have more responsibilities regarding the children but I think I will be better if I don’t see him*].” She sees separation as liberation for her and her children. Still, she stays because of her financial dependency and social isolation.

Ana, on the other hand, shares how threats of family separation are also used by abusive partners as a way to manipulate women into staying in abusive relationships,

[k] Pues nomás yo lo sabía [que él tenía otra mujer]; entre yo y él. Y ya al final cuando él me dijo que, si quería yo irme, que me fuera, pero los niños se le iban a quedar a él, porque él estaba seguro que me los iban a quitar. Entonces yo tuve un poco de miedo, porque como a mí me da epilepsia, y yo tuve miedo que me los iba a quitar. Entonces yo no me fui a ningún lado. Así con todo lo que estaba pasando yo dije, “Me quedo, porque yo no voy a dejar a los niños.” Y en ese momento pues yo quería irme a algún lado para donde él no supiera de mí. [...] Pero pues digo, “¿A dónde me voy a ir? No tengo otro lado.”

Here, one can see not only how Ana’s immigration status results in a fear of family separation but also the intersection of her own status as a person with a disability. After learning that her husband was having an affair, Ana confronted her husband and asked that he end the relationship. In response, her husband informed her that not only would nothing about that relationship change but also she could leave him if she wanted but “pero los niños se le iban a quedar a él [*the children were going to stay with him*].” He threatened that if they went with her, the city would take them away. Given her status as an undocumented housewife with limited

social networks and a dis/ability, she is forced to stay in the relationship: “¿A dónde me voy a ir? No tengo otro lado’ [where am I going to go? I have nowhere else].” This sense of helplessness is particularly piercing for undocumented women who encounter increased “isolation, fear of deportation, and limited access to social services [which perpetuated intimate partner violence]” and prevent women from seeking help (Adams & Campbell, 2012). In addition, these mothers are less likely to find viable employment (on the basis of their immigration status, limited English-proficiency, and education levels), which leads them to also be financially dependent on their partners. Maria also felt unable to seek employment based on Justin’s disability-related needs which increased her financial dependency on her partner.

Considering how difficult their lives are in the U.S. and their perception of better prospects in Mexico one is left wondering, why stay? Why stay in abusive relationships? Why stay in unwelcoming communities? In the following blurb, Ana offers a glimpse of an answer:

[I] Yo en cuanto lo agarren, ahí en México yo me voy, no es tanto la separación, yo me iría. [...] más principalmente porque [para] nosotros no es tanta la diferencia, porque nacimos ahí, como sea, pues estamos acostumbrados a donde nacimos. Pero un poquito diferente por los niños, porque ellos han estado aquí, han crecido. Es muy diferente a la de allá.

Here, Ana acknowledges that returning to Mexico offers very little disadvantage for her and her husband because they were “nacimos ahí [born there].” However, it would be very “diferente [different]” for their children because “ellos han estado aquí, han crecido. Es muy diferente a la de allá [they have been here, have grown. It is very different than there].”

Using intersectionality, I posit that, for these women, motherhood is, in and of itself, oppressive because it puts them in a position where they feel they must tolerate interpersonal and systemic violence on the basis of class, language, and gender. They are tolerant of these oppressive existences because they fear that in Mexico their children’s quality of life would suffer.

THERE, IT IS NOT LIKE HERE

The mothers recognize that life in Mexico would be better for them, but, like Maria, they are also conscious of the fact that a return to Mexico could be detrimental to their children.

[m] Si me voy allá a México con ellos, para mí no es problema ponerme a trabajar. Y mi mamá tal vez me cuidaría de mis hijos, pero no tendría [...] sus terapias de lenguaje, sus terapias ocupacionales en la escuela. Allá las escuelas son de 40 niños en un solo salón. Ahí no es que te puedan poner en un aula más pequeña con niños.

Maria’s concerns for Justin are primarily grounded in ensuring his continued access to the services and resources he needs: “sus terapias de lenguaje, sus terapias ocupacionales [his speech therapies, his occupational therapies].” She also worries about the large class sizes: “Allá las escuelas son de 40 niños en un solo salón. Ahí no es que te puedan poner en un aula más pequeña... [There the schools are of 40 kids in one classroom. There they can’t put you in a small class...]. Paty also shares this concern:

[n] Al menos allá, no hay las clases como acá, las ayudas como acá. Sería una escuela normal. [...] A veces yo le digo a mi esposo cuando de [Dan], “No sé, no sé qué hubiera pasado si [Dan] hubiera nacido ahí. No sé,” le digo, “por obra de Dios, no sé. No sé por qué fue eso,” Yo siento que allá no hubiera tenido el mismo éxito que aquí. Allá aprendemos porque aprendemos. Allá, usted sabe, en un pueblo, sí, hay medicina, doctores, pero no como acá. Acá a veces, si los niños son hiperactivos, hay medicamento. Si los niños son esto, hay formas de cómo ayudarlos, en México no.

Paty recognizes that in Mexico “no hay las clases como acá, las ayudas como acá [there aren’t classes like here, the services like here].” She acknowledges that what is available there is “no como aca [not like here].” Thus, she feels that even with the “medicina [y] doctores [medicine and] doctors” available in Mexico, Dan would not have reached “el mismo éxito que aquí [the

same success like here].” Perhaps, it is for this reason that she considers it a blessing—“por obra de dios [*by god’s work*]”—that Dan was born in the US. Her experiences with the US education system have filled her with insecurity about what her son’s life would have been like had he been born in Mexico: “No sé, no sé qué hubiera pasado si [Dan] hubiera nacido ahí. No sé [*I dont know, I dont know what would have happened if Dan had been born there. I don’t know*].”

Ana also worries about her daughter’s health outcomes in Mexico:

[o] Como nosotros vivimos en el pueblo, pues ahí no es como aquí. Pues ahí en el pueblito como uno se crezca, y si hay doctor, se ve, pues no. Y si hay doctor, pues hay que ir hasta la ciudad. Pero pues allá no es como aquí, como que hay doctor de neurólogo, todas esas cosas, ahí solo hay un doctor, cualquier doctor que atiende a chiquitos y a grandes, y de grandes a chiquitos no hay diferencia. Tal vez habrá los doctores que yo vine a conocer aquí – los neurólogos—por parte de mi [María Teresa], tantos doctores, tal vez los habrá en la mera ciudad, en la capital, pero en mi pueblo no, en mi pueblo es solo un doctor. [Eso lo que me preocupa] un poquito, porque pues ahí se mueve también con la economía. Pues ahí es como uno se pueda sostener o como ellos vayan creciendo. Sin dinero, pues también uno no se puede curar.

Like Paty, Ana cites access to “doctores [*doctors*]” for her daughter as a major motivator for remaining in the U.S. She recognizes that “Tal vez habrá los doctores que yo vine a conocer aquí [*maybe there are doctors like the ones I met here*]” in Mexico but they would be inaccessible to her because of distance and costs. She restates that “ahí no es como aquí [*there it’s not like here*].” While “en el pueblito [*in the little village*]” her daughter would have access to doctors, she would not have access to specialists like pediatricians or neurologists: “cualquier doctor que atiende a chiquitos y a grandes, y de grandes a chiquitos, no hay diferencia [*any doctor who cares for young and old, and from big to small, there is no difference*].”

The theme of “not like here” was universal. Not only is resource availability different, the paths to access even the most meager resources are distinctive and difficult, especially for people living in small towns like the ones these mothers come from. In the following, Maria recognizes that it might be possible for her to find in Mexico some of the same services her son receives in the U.S., but it would be costly “mudarse hasta la ciudad para poder tal vez trabajar y buscarle una escuela privada [*to move to the city in order to maybe work and find a private school*]”

[p] Sobre todo de que está siendo un lugar donde hay mucho apoyo, es la ciudad y para que te vayas a tu pueblo donde no hay nada ni oportunidades de trabajo. Las escuelas, nada. Uno tendría que mudarse hasta la ciudad para poder tal vez trabajar y buscarle una escuela privada para que lo puedan ayudar. Pero tendría uno que trabajar mucho para poder pagar las colegiaturas de las escuelas. Es muy difícil.

In this version of life in Mexico, Maria and her children would once again be forced to leave her local town in exchange of city living where she would be faced with a high cost of living, increased educational costs, reduced employment opportunities, and lack of family support which she so desperately seeks, and would require, as a single parent. Thus, she is faced with the difficult decision of remaining and enduring hardship while actively mothering her children and accessing free services for her child or returning and surviving as a single mother needing to sacrifice her relationship with her children to provide for Justin. So, recognizing that that life “es muy difícil [*is very difficult*],” she chooses to stay.

Although public schools and U.S. doctors offer these mothers access to services and care they would not have had in Mexico, these systems, as Ana reveals, are also responsible for labels their children may not have had in Mexico:

[q] Pues ahí en el pueblo crecen, ahora sí que diremos como pues a las manos de Dios. Porque si el niño nació así, pues así va a crecer o así. Yo creo que tal vez sí lo notaría en el aprendizaje, pero pues así nos

quedamos. [...] aquí pues doctor que para esto, doctor que para otras cosas. Claro que aquí los niños yo veo que los revisan más que allá. Pero pues ahí haciendo, mientras el niño llore, o qué se yo, pueda caminar, él está bien.

Here, Ana discloses that children in her small village grow “a las manos de Dios [*by the hands of God*].” She may still have noticed issues with Maria Teresa’s “aprendizaje [*learning*],” but things would still work out. In addition, whereas in the U.S. children see all kinds of specialist “doctor que para esto, doctor que para otras cosas [*a doctor for this, a doctor for that*]” it does not feel wholly necessary in her community where as long as a “niño llore [*child cries*]” and “pueda caminar [*can walk*]” they are fine. At the onset, this may be seen as a reflection of lack of access or medical care; yet, it can also be seen as reflective of a more inclusive community where children are not overly pathologized and are viewed as “well” as long as they can meet a loose criterion of mobility and communication. For Ana, without labels, life simply goes on.

Paty also discussed growing up without labels; she explains learning in her village: [r]“Allá aprendemos porque aprendemos. [...] Acá a veces, si los niños son hiperactivos, hay medicamento [...] En México, si [los niños] son hiperactivos, bueno, hay que estar llamando más la atención. Decía mi mamá, ‘Chingarlos más para corregirlos.’” Here, Paty shared how even in circumstances where labels might exist for “niños hiperactivos [*hyperactive children*],” the response to the label is distinct. In the U.S., a hyperactive child is treated with “medicamentos [*medication*],” but in Mexico, hyperactivity is treated through correction. Use of labels in this situation would not impact Paty’s role as a mother because it would be mitigated by a familiar response: “hay que estar llamando más la atención [*you have to reprimand them more*],” as opposed to treatments that create a dependency on doctors.

The medicalization of EBLADs is not viewed as entirely negative, at least not by Maria:

[s] Pues tal vez allá sería más difícil de diagnosticar al niño. Porque allá en México a lo mejor hay muchos niños y que uno ni se-- Yo

al menos, yo no sabía qué era el autismo, yo lo vine a saber hasta acá, de que hay muchos niños así que muchos padres los maltratan y piensan que son berrinches de los niños. Pero yo creo que yo no hubiera sabido en realidad qué estuviera pasando con Justin si yo estuviera en México. O sea que por un lado estaría bien yo, pero por el otro lado estaría mal mi niño, porque ahí hay menos recursos para hacerle un diagnóstico y para ayudarlo, para darle más ayuda a él, sería más difícil para él, para mí también.

Maria brings forth the idea that although these labels may not exist in Mexico, autistic children like her son do and outcomes for those children are not favorable. One reason is that without the labels, parents believe their children are mischievous rather than neurodiverse, leading to mistreatment. This is supported by Paty’s claim that in Mexico you have to “Chingarlos más para corregirlos [*spank them to teach them*].” In this way, children’s disability labels serve not just to support the children through access to services but also to support the mothers by helping them understand the locus of their children’s behavior. Still, by attributing the source of this knowledge to the U.S. medical and educational system, mothers are made to feel that their children’s only chance at success is also located within the parameters of the country.

This medical–educational model makes mothers feel stuck in the U.S. on accounts of services and parental education and presents mothers with a framing of their children as different, leading them to worry about their children being socially rejected in Mexico. In the following vignette, Maria identifies a need to stay in the U.S. due to concerns about Justin’s socioemotional well-being and his ability to find community in Mexico.

[t] Existe mucho bullying allá. A veces que hay niños sanos, se podría decir, y aun así les hacen bullying. Allá en mi pueblo de donde yo soy, muchos niños han muerto por bullying que les hacen, se suicidan. Entonces eso yo no quisiera que le pasara a mi hijo, porque él es inocente, el no sabe de maldad, no sabe de malicia.

Here, we encounter Maria’s central fear: returning to Mexico could be a death sentence for her

son. She worries that given the reality of there “existe mucho bullying [*being a lot of bullying*]” and “niños [que] han muerto [*children who have died*]” as a result, moving Justin there could be detrimental. She frames this worry in the context of this happening to “niños sanos [*healthy children*],” alluding to the fact that her son is different. In the end, for Maria, staying is not a matter of accessing services, it is a matter of life and death.

DisCrit allows us to understand how disability has been contorted as not only a tax on the public but also as an exceptionality. The racialization and pathologization of PWD as burden is imbedded in the ways the mothers present disability conceptualization in Mexican schools and communities. Disability is also framed as an individual problem demanding mothers relocate to larger, more expensive areas, to access the supports their children need to thrive.

CAGED BY LANGUAGE

The probability of social exclusion and rejection for transborder/transnational EBLADs is not solely rooted in their disability labels but also in their English-only/mostly educations.

Although the mothers recognize that in the U.S. their children have access to resources, they also recognized that that access is precarious and that their future in the U.S. is uncertain: [u] “Yo estoy aquí ahora, ¿verdad? Mañana, no lo sé. Y si un día, yo pudiera ir con ellos a mi país, para que ellos entiendan, porque allí no está nada escrito en inglés. Ahí, puro español.” In this quote, one mother indicates that she understands that she is living in the U.S. “ahora [*now*]” and that “un día, [ella] pudiera ir con ellos a [su] país [*one day, [she] could go with them to [her] country*].” As such, she wants her children to be bilingual so that “ellos entiendan, porque allí no está nada escrito en inglés. Ahí, puro español [*they understand, because there nothing is written in English. There, pure Spanish*].

One reason to develop these children’s bilingualism lies in the mothers’ awareness that an English-mostly education is not readily available in Mexico, and if it is, it is inaccessible:

[v] Si en caso de que ella se fuera igual de aquí para allá, sería solo el español también. [...]

tengo entendido que hay el inglés, pero ya hasta por la ciudad de Puebla. Y nosotros como somos de un pueblito pequeñito, se puede decir rural, pequeñito, donde hay menos de mil personas.

Here, Ana indicates that she understands that although her children have grown up in the states, an English education would be hard for her children to access if they return to Mexico. Although she notes that English can be learned there, it is not available in her “rural,” “pueblito pequeñito [*small village*].” But, as Maria recounts, “sí, les enseñan inglés a los niños, pero no es como [...] aquí. Sería más el español allá. [*yes, they do teach them English, but it is not like here. It would be more Spanish there*].” Thus, even with unlimited resources, it would be difficult to find schools, in Spanish-dominant countries, that could maintain the academic development of children who had been previously educated in an English-centering system. Regardless of schooling options, the mother’s in this study did not simply view bilingualism as necessary for their children’s academic success; they also viewed it as a critical component of family unification.

Although some mothers in the study had accepted the possibility of family separation, few would accept it as a longer term outcome. As such, all of them saw bilingualism as a way to prevent it. Even though most of the children were placed in English-only classes, the mothers still encouraged their children to learn Spanish, as was the case with Paty and her son: [w] “*risas* Y por eso le digo a él, ‘Tú debes de por eso aprender el español. Porque tú no eres de acá, de acá. Sí, eres nacido acá. Pero tus padres son mexicanos.’” Paty uses her family’s “foreignness” to encourage her son’s bilingualism, making him very aware of how he does not fully belong: “[*not from here, from here*].” She also understands that he is not fully embraced, reinforcing their vulnerability by telling them, “Y no se les olvide que no son americanos, que también son mexicanos [*And don’t forget that you are not Americans, that you are also Mexican*].”

[x] Y si hubiera en el momento, no sé--, “le digo a veces,” si nos deportaran, lógico. Eres mi hijo. Te tengo que llevar. Y si ya no regreso, no te puedo dejar acá solo. [...] Tú tienes que

aprender el español porque del país que yo vengo, no se habla el inglés. Las escuelas no te dan el inglés. Entonces, habla Spanish”. Es como lo entendió.

She reinforces her prior claim that, “Tú no eres de acá” [*you are not from here*] by telling him that “si nos deportaran [...] Te tengo que llevar [*if we are deported [...] I have to take you with me*].” She does this so that he understands that even though “eres nacido acá” [*you were born here*] he can also be affected by deportation and so he needs to “aprender el español” [*learn Spanish*]. She reinforces this vulnerability by insisting, “Y no se les olvide que no son americanos, que también son mexicanos [*And don’t forget that you are not Americans, that you are also Mexican*].”

Paty states that she loves her children and would never leave them here with family: ¿Maestra con quién los dejaría acá? Tengo familia. ¿Usted cree que mi familia los va a tratar igual, como uno, como madre? No todas tenemos ese amor. “[*Teacher, with whom would I leave them here? I have family. Do you think that my family will treat them the same, as me, as a mother? We don’t all have that love*].” For her, familial love is not equal to maternal love. So, she tells her children: “aprovechen, aprovechen aprendan el inglés como el español, aprendan el inglés porque les va a hacer falta, porque es su idioma de ustedes, y el español por si algún día me deportan y se tengan que ir conmigo [*take advantage, take advantage learn English and Spanish, learn English because [you] will need it, because it is your language, and Spanish in case I day they deport me and you have to go with me*].” Adding that “no le pido eso a Dios, pero por si las dudas, hay que prevenir de todos hijos [*I do not ask God for that, but just in case, we must prepare for everything children*].” and asserting, the reasons why “es bueno que ellos aprendan los dos idiomas [*it is good that they learn two languages*].”

In this finding, issues of LHR clearly emerge. Although schools typically consider language allocation policies based on local needs, for transnational/mixed-status families, like these, language is not bound to a location. To the contrary, their location decisions are bound by language, indicating a need to address language as a human right not just as a pedagogical choice.

DISCUSSION

The mothers featured in this article were raising children with variable disability classifications. Two children were diagnosed with high-incidence disabilities—primarily speech and language impairment and learning disability. These labels have been recognized as disproportionately applied to culturally and linguistically diverse children as a result of evaluator bias and social inequity (Shifrer, 2018). Most scholarship around labels focuses on the long-term implications of classifying children, but the mothers in this study indicate that for many families, there are real-time implications as well. For mothers who face the risk of deportation, these labels function as limitations not just for their children but for their entire families because the labels lead them to feel as if they have to stay in the U.S. to meet their children’s disability-related needs. The MoEBLADs are overwhelmed with a sense of responsibility to ensure that their children have access to the practitioners, services, and programs without interrogating their validity or appropriateness. Thus, they carry with them the looming fear of deportation while suppressing the possibility of a life without persecution in their COO that was shared in “Life Would be Simpler, Better.” The absence of interrogation stems from Latinxs high regard for educators but reflect the reality that as women with limited resources, they cannot access the full scope of special education information nor access the spaces in which these discussions occur. As a result, we can see that women’s migration decisions are first based on the understanding that relocation will be temporary, and then once they have children, their decisions are motivated by their children’s disability-related needs and linguistic practices.

An incomplete understanding of the functions of disability labels and special education in the U.S., coupled with their undocumented status means that these issues, although relevant to all immigrant families, are more dire for these mothers because they must continue interacting with government agents: teachers, service providers, social workers, and administrators, and in government buildings: schools, district offices, etc., thus, regularly risking being caught up in an ICE raid. This is particularly an issue for undocumented

mothers of CWD because these children require an increased level of parental engagement and supervision (e.g., being dropped-off or picked-up from school, attendance at Individual Education Plan meetings). Given the toxicity of living in constant fear of deportation, many mixed-status families consider returning to their COO, but for mothers of CWD, there are major concerns regarding loss of services for their children; these mothers know that they would be unable to access the same level of care their children receive, either because of lack of availability or because of limited resources.

Ultimately, these children are given classification labels that make the mothers feel dependent on the same doctors and educators who assigned the disability diagnosis which heavily informs their decision to stay in the U.S. If we think about this through a DisCrit framework, this could be understood as educational and medical systems framing variations in human diversity as abnormal without consideration for the racial implications of those labels. In addition, it creates both a market for services and validation for inequality that obscures race but is deeply grounded in ableism and racism. Thus, these classifications individualize both the pathology and the response. This leads the mothers to believe that moving their children to their COO would be detrimental, adding an additional sense of guilt, fear, and manipulation to a community of women who are already enduring a number of intense stressors. This indicates that children's classification labels play a major role, not only in their migration decisions but also in mothers' day-to-day lives even when that means taking on uncertain risks.

One of the major stressors that the mothers shared were unhealthy partnerships and marriages. Toxic relationships were cited by the mothers as the driving force behind their desire to return to their COO. However, research shows that physical or psychological "Violence in children's lives often causes disruption to their schooling and harms the quality of their educational experiences and outcomes," which could greatly impact EBLADs continued experiences as classified students (Lloyd, 2018, para. 1). As such, the decision to stay results in sustained harm for both mothers and children. If we take note of mothers' narratives as testimonios, we can understand their stories not as isolated

incidents but as snapshots of larger issues relating to oppression at the nexus of gender, class, education, and disability. Although schools cannot be held responsible for the living conditions of children, they should be aware of how school-based decisions influence children's living conditions.

It is important that we consider educational decisions in a more holistic way, not just thinking about the schooling conditions but the family conditions. We must also decenter western perspectives that discount the productivity of life outside the U.S. Although the mothers in this article recognized that in their COO their children would not have had access to the doctors and services that supported them in the US, they also believe that their children would still have been able to lead meaningful lives. Had these children been born in the mothers' COO, they may have had more complicated (and limited) educational experiences, but they would have had the social support systems that have been identified as critically important to an increased quality of life for PWD. This does not mean services should be withheld from EBLADs to facilitate their adaptation to life in the global south. It means we must unpack how classification practices often mimic what Baker deemed "the hunt for disability" and move toward discourses of disability that focus on changing social structures to be more accepting of diverse students rather than promoting individual conformity through labels and services (Baker, 2002). An obvious, acute way to do this is to support and develop EBLADs' bilingualism.

Although there have been increases in bilingual program development in districts across the U.S., access to these programs remains rather limited for EBLADs (Cioè-Peña 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). Although the motivation behind monolingualism is increasing academic success, it is restrictive (Gonzalez-Herrera, 2017). The focus on bilingualism as a commodity also promotes the idea that access to cultures and communities outside of the U.S. is a privilege that can only be granted to those deemed as deserving and/or most likely to succeed—which often tends to be individuals who already possess a great deal of capital (Cioè-Peña, 2017a). When linguistic placement decisions are influenced by disability classifications, educators must recognize that these decisions have dire consequences. On

the one hand, they limit a family's mobility, and on the other, they influence how mothers view their children, shifting from perspectives of capacity with regard to language and perspectives of deficiency with regard to their learning needs.

By denying EBLADs access to educational spaces that will develop and sustain their bilingualism and biliteracy, we are communicating several hurtful ideologies: First, the kind of (interpersonal) bilingualism that EBLAD's possess is inadequate and thus worthless to society at large. Second, EBLADs are not worthy of bilingual education because they are not likely to have access to, nor succeed in, the global world. And third, EBLADs are unlikely to return to the international communities that they are tied to, primarily because those communities are exiguous. The mothers in this study recognized that their children needed to be bilingual to survive; still, they allowed schools to place their children in monolingual settings because they internalized the view that English fluency for academic success was more important than bilingualism for subsistence (Cioè-Peña, 2020a). This creates a situation where subtractive bilingualism is at play, resulting in decreased use of the home language and increased use of the target language until eventually, only the target language remains (Baker, 2011). These practices are harmful to all EBLADs and particularly damaging for EBLADs in mixed-status families because the loss of their home language can result in, depending on their place of residency, manifestations of linguisticism (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2002, pp. 115–156). In addition, the mothers internalized perceptions of Mexico as inadequate and incapable of meeting their EBLADs needs. If bilingual education were to be viewed as a vehicle for LHR, EBLADs would have the ability to develop their home language, reducing the negative impact of their return migration.

If bilingualism is understood as an LHR or if special education was understood through a DisCrit framework, then an EBLAD's disability would not serve as a restriction to their bilingualism but rather an additional motive. By denying EBLADs entrée to bilingual programs focused on maintenance, the U.S. educational system promotes the idea that English is the only language

EBLADs possess that has any value, thus, missing the intersectional perspectives mothers hold: their children are transnational, EBLADs with needs that cannot be parsed. Their social and academic needs are interrelated and interdependent; their educations should be too. When EBLADs are denied, the linguistic resources needed to build a life beyond the U.S., a toxic cycle is created where one is unwanted and unwelcome yet trapped by circumstances.

IMPLICATIONS

The absence of intersectionality in educational discourses and policies is actively harming the mixed-status families of PWD (Cioè-Peña, 2017b). Thus, the themes identified here have great implications for policies and future research. The policy implications regarding the education of EBLADs are as follows: increases to (1) bilingual education funding to create language maintenance programs focused on EBLAD's bilingualism and biliteracy; (2) EBLAD's access to inclusive education through increased teacher training on the linguistic capacities of CWD; and (3) ban immigration raids near schools so mothers/parents can safely access services. Future research should investigate the following: (a) How many EBLADs have access to inclusive educational spaces that are supportive of their academic and linguistic needs? and how access is determined? (b) What role does bilingualism play in the social lives of EBLADs? (c) How do monolingual placements impact EBLADs parents' capacity to advocate for their children and themselves? (d) What are the experiences of transnational EBLADs who move to a parent's COO? And (e) How can educators prepare EBLADs for successful lives in the U.S. and abroad?

Finally, we need more formal research on how static policies come together to oppress undocumented mothers, particularly of EBLADs. The circumstances for these families must be considered within immigration policies, just like those of immigrants included in the Dream Act and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (Fathali, 2013). Blanket policies that deport parents without attending to their children's needs are tantamount to replacing systemic racism with systemic ableism or, as Annamma et al., 2013 would say, attending only

to issues of race without considering how issues of race and disability interact to create new systems of oppression.

Understanding why families continue to endure indignities at the hands of the U.S. government will help us understand not only how to better serve these EBLADS and their families within public schools in the U.S. but will also bring to light how educational policy-makers and researchers can advocate for, develop, and support appropriate educational systems in Latin American countries of origin. Engaging in this kind of global social justice work will ensure that the needs of EBLAD students will continue to be met, regardless of their location or their parents' immigration status. It will also ensure that families are not held hostage to deficit-based understandings of their children.

NOTES

¹Mixed-status families are composed of undocumented immigrants and U.S. citizens and/or documented immigrants.

²I use the term EBLAD in opposition of the deficit-centered term English language learners and to acknowledge the reality of inappropriate referrals that many emergent bilinguals face on account of implicit bias.

³Alternative meanings: "work them harder so they learn;" "bitch them out to get them in shape;" "keep nagging them until they act right."

REFERENCES

Acevedo, L. d. A. (2001). *Telling to live: Latina feminist testimonios*. Duke University Press.

Adams, M. E., & Campbell, J. (2012). Being undocumented & intimate partner violence (IPV): Multiple vulnerabilities through the lens of feminist intersectionality. *Women's Health and Urban Life*, 11, 15–34.

Ager, A., Stark, L., Sparling, T., & Ager, W. (2010). Rapid appraisal in humanitarian emergencies using Participatory Ranking Methodology (PRM). Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health Program on Forced Migration and Health.

American Civil Liberties Union. (2018). New ACLU report shows fear of deportation is deterring immigrants from reporting crimes. Retrieved February 15, 2020 from <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/new-aclu-report-shows-fear-deportation-deterring-immigrants-reporting-crimes>.

Annamma, S. A., Connor, D., & Ferri, B. (2013). Disability critical race studies (DisCrit): Theorizing at the intersections of race and dis/ability. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 16(1), 1–31.

Artiga, S., & Diaz, M. (2019). Health coverage and care of undocumented immigrants [disparities policy issue]. Kaiser Family Foundation. Retrieved January 12, 2020 from <https://www.kff.org/disparities-policy/issue-brief/health-coverage-and-care-of-undocumented-immigrants/>.

Asad, A. L., & Rosen, E. (2019). Hiding within racial hierarchies: How undocumented immigrants make residential decisions in an American city. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45(11), 1857–1882.

Bagenstos, S. R. (2017). Disability, universalism, social rights, and citizenship. *Cardozo Law Review*, 39, 413–436.

Baker, B. (2002). The hunt for disability: The new eugenics and the normalization of school children. *Teachers College Record*, 104(4), 663–703.

Baker, C. (2011). Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism. *Multilingual Matters*.

Bernal, D. D., Burciaga, R., & Carmona, J. F. (2012). Chicana/latina testimonios: Mapping the methodological, pedagogical, and political. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45(3), 363–372.

Beverly, J. (2009). The margin at the center: On testimonio (testimonial narrative). *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, 35(1), 11–28.

Cioè-Peña, M. (2017a). Disability, bilingualism and what it means to be normal. *Journal of Bilingual Education Research & Instruction*, 19(1), 138–160.

Cioè-Peña, M. (2017b). The intersectional gap: How bilingual students in the United States are excluded from inclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 21(9), 906–919.

Cioè-Peña, M. (2018). "Yo soy su mama": Latinx mothers raising emergent bilinguals labeled as disabled. [Dissertation]. All Dissertations, Theses, and Capstone Projects. Retrieved from https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/2574.

Cioè-Peña, M. (2020a). Raciolinguistics and the education of emergent bilinguals labeled as disabled. *Urban Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-020-00581-z>

Cioè-Peña, M. (2020b) Bilingualism for students with disabilities, deficit or advantage?: Perspectives of Latinx mothers, *Bilingual Research Journal*, 43(3), 253–266.

Cioè-Peña, M. (2020c). Dual language and the erasure of emergent bilinguals labeled as disabled. In N. Flores, A. Tseng, & N. C. Subtirelu (Eds.), *Bilingualism for all? raciolinguistic perspectives on dual language education*. *Multilingual Matters*.

- Cokley, R. (May 25, 2018). The rights of disabled Americans are under attack. CNN. Retrieved June 11, 2019 from <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/14/opinions/disability-access-under-attack-trump-hr-620-cokley-opinion/index.html>
- Cokley, R., & Leibson, H. (2018). Trump's public-charge rule would threaten disabled immigrants' health and safety. Center for American Progress.
- Connolly, D. (2016). The book of isaias: A child of hispanic immigrants seeks his own America. St. Martin's Press.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299.
- Cruz, P. L. (2018). A vulnerable population: U.S. citizen minors living in Mexico. [Issue Brief]. Retrieved February 1, 2020 from <https://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/102732>.
- Debonis, M. (2018). House passes changes to Americans with disabilities act over activists' objections. *Washington Post*. Retrieved February 10, 2020 from https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/house-passes-changes-to-americans-with-disabilities-act-over-activists-objections/2018/02/15/c812c9ea-125b-11e8-9065-e55346f6de81_story.html.
- Detention Watch Network. (2016). Immigration detention 101. Retrieved February 11, 2020 from <https://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/issues/detention-101>
- Disability Rights International. (2014). Asylum and immigration. Retrieved February 13, 2020 from <https://www.driadvocacy.org/asylum-and-immigration/>
- Fathali, H. (2013). The American DREAM: DACA, DREAMers, and comprehensive immigration reform. *Seattle University Law Review*, 37, 221–254.
- Gonzalez-Barrera, A. (2015). More Mexicans leaving than coming to the US. [Hispanic Trends]. Pew Research Center. Retrieved February 1, 2020 from <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2015/11/19/more-mexicans-leaving-than-coming-to-the-u-s/>.
- Gonzalez-Herrera, M. (2017). ESL and ELL program effectiveness: Providing academic success for students [Master's thesis]. Monterey Bay: California State University. Digital Commons. Retrieved March 5, 2020 from https://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/caps_thes_all/198.
- Gramlich, J. (2020). How border apprehensions, ICE arrests and deportations have changed under Trump (Fact Tank). Pew Research Center. Retrieved July 1, 2020 from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/03/02/how-border-apprehensions-ice-arrests-and-deportations-have-changed-under-trump/>.
- Hooghe, M., & Dassonneville, R. (2018). Explaining the Trump vote: The effect of racist resentment and anti-immigrant sentiments. *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 51(3), 528–534.
- Huber, L. P. (2009). Disrupting apartheid of knowledge: Testimonio as methodology in Latina/o critical race research in education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 22(6), 639–654.
- Jimenez, L., & Flores, A. (2019). 3 ways DeVos has put students at risk by deregulating education. Center for American Progress. Retrieved January 10, 2020 from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED596184>
- Kleyn, T. (2017). Centering transborder students: Perspectives on identity, languaging and schooling between the US and Mexico. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 19(2), 76–84.
- Kleyn, T., Perez, W., & Vásquez, R. (2016). Una Vida, Dos Países - Children and Youth (Back) in Mexico [Video]. Vimeo. Retrieved June 2, 2019 from <https://vimeo.com/156295883>
- Lindsay, M. J. (2018). The perpetual invasion: Past as prologue in constitutional immigration law. *Roger Williams UL Rev.*, 23, 369–392.
- Lloyd, M. (2018). Domestic violence and education: Examining the impact of domestic violence on young children, children, and young people and the potential role of schools. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 2094.
- Mejia, B. (2018). "It's so hard right now": For a mother who self-deported to Mexico, days of feeling lost. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved February 1, 2020 from <https://www.latimes.com/local/la-me-ln-dual-citizenship-20170808-htlmlstory.html>.
- Patler, C. (2018). Citizens but for papers: Undocumented youth organizations, anti-deportation campaigns, and the reframing of citizenship. *Social Problems*, 65, 96–115.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). Narrative methods for the human sciences. SAGE.
- Ríos-Espinosa, C. (2020). Better to make yourself invisible: Family violence against people with disabilities in Mexico. *Human Rights Watch*. Retrieved July 1, 2020 from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/06/04/better-make-yourself-invisible/family-violence-against-people-disabilities-mexico>
- Rodríguez, P., Aceves, J., Ahern, L., Brizuela, L., Jacobstein, D., Heffernan, J., et al (2019). At the Mexico-US border and segregated from society: Children and adults with disabilities subject to arbitrary detention, abuse and early death inside Mexican orphanages and institutions. Disability Rights International. Retrieved February 13, 2020 from <https://www.driadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/MEX-Report-May-2019.pdf>.
- Sheridan, M. B. (2019). The little-noticed surge across the U.S.-Mexico border: It's Americans, heading

- south. The Washington Post. Retrieved February 1, 2020 from https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/the-little-noticed-surge-across-the-us-mexico-border-its-americans-heading-south/2019/05/18/7988421e-6c28-11e9-bbe7-1c798fb80536_story.html.
- Shifrer, D. (2018). Clarifying the social roots of the disproportionate classification of racial minorities and males with learning disabilities. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 59(3), 384–406.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2002). Linguistic human rights in education: Western hypocrisy in European and global language policy. Power and culture, plenary sessions: The 5th international congress of Hungarian studies. University of Jyväskylä.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2005). Language policy and linguistic human rights. In T. Ricento (Ed.), *An introduction to language policy: Theory and method*. Wiley.
- The National Immigration Forum. (2019). Supreme court ruling made indefinite immigrant detention the law of the land. The National Immigration Forum. Retrieved December 12, 2019 from <https://immigrationforum.org/article/supreme-court-ruling-made-indefinite-immigrant-detention-the-law-of-the-land/>
- UN Disability and Child Rights Groups. (2019). U.N. disability and child Rights groups on behalf of children without parental care key recommendations. Retrieved February 13, 2020 from https://www.driadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019-09-12_UNGA-Right-to-Family-Life.pdf.
- United Nations. (2006). Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and optional protocol. Retrieved December 12, 2019 from <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>
- Vargas, E. D., & Pirog, M. A. (2016). Mixed-status families and WIC uptake: The effects of risk of deportation on program use. *Social Science Quarterly*, 97(3), 555–572.
- Villazor, R. C., & Johnson, K. R. (2019). The Trump administration and the war on immigration diversity. *Wake Forest Law Review*, 54, 101–143.
- Wiener, J., & Kaiser Health, N. (May 19, 2017.). The deportation fears of immigrants with disabled children. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved June 12, 2019 from <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/05/deportation-disability/526986/>

- Wray-Lake, L., Wells, R., Alvis, L., Delgado, S., Syvertsen, A. K., & Metzger, A. (2018). Being a Latinx adolescent under a Trump presidency: Analysis of Latinx youth's reactions to immigration politics. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 87, 192–204.

AUTHOR BIO



María Cioè-Peña, as a bilingual/biliterate neurodiverse researcher, María examines the intersections of disability, language, school-parent partnerships, and education policy. She focuses specifically on Latinx bilingual children with disabilities, their families, and their ability to access multilingual and inclusive learning spaces within public schools. María's two-time award-winning dissertation focused on the experiences of Spanish-speaking mothers raising emergent bilinguals labeled as disabled. María's work is featured in multiple journals including *Urban Review*; *Education Forum*; *Bilingual Research Journal*; *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, as well as contributed to multiple edited volumes. María Cioè-Peña is an assistant professor in Educational Foundations and a Community-Engaged Teaching Fellow at Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ; E-mail: cioepenam@montclair.edu.

Copyright of Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners is the property of Division for Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Learners and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.