

“I Feel the Responsibility”: The Nexus of Secondary Teacher Knowledge, Rural Education, and Emergent Bilinguals

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Rural schools in the United States are facing an increase in the number of Emergent Bilinguals (EBs). Teachers in rural communities must facilitate learning for EB students whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds differ from the mainstream. However, rural teachers are less prepared to address EBs' educational needs, and little is known about the actual teacher knowledge (TK) required to provide effective EB instruction in secondary rural settings. Grounded in teacher knowledge and place-based education frameworks, this qualitative study examined what teachers say they know related to the teaching and learning of EBs in a rural secondary school community. The study addressed two main questions: (1) What personal and professional knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about teaching EBs in rural settings? and (2) What place-based knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about their work with EBs? Primary data from four secondary teachers teaching EBs in a rural school in the southeastern United States consisted of video-recorded interviews and photo elicitation that illuminated teachers' told narratives of their personal, professional, and place-based experiences via stories. Thematic data analysis followed an iterative approach. Findings from this study demonstrated that the teachers' personal and place-based knowledges emerged as the most prominent influences in their work. Teachers' bilingualism, hispanidad, and faith were leveraged to build relationships with their rural secondary EBs. Thus, relationship-building was central to teachers' knowledge-base of working with EBs. A four-dimensional teacher knowledge model is proposed. Findings may inform teacher education programs and extend the research base on rural secondary EB education.

Keywords: rural education, teacher education, bilingual education, English learners, teacher knowledge, place-based education, emergent bilinguals, Latinx, Hispanic, secondary school settings, relationship-building

Rural schools in the United States are facing an increase in the number of Emergent Bilinguals (EBs), the majority being from Hispanic backgrounds, who participate in mainstream inclusive classrooms where the primary medium of instruction is English. Like their non-rural counterparts, teachers in rural communities must facilitate learning for EB students whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds are varied. However, rural teachers are less prepared, and sometimes unwilling, to integrate EB differences and address

their educational needs. Although some research on what teachers need to know to effectively teach language and content to EBs has been conducted, little is known about the actual teacher knowledge (TK) required to provide effective EB instruction in secondary rural settings.

Currently in the United States there are approximately five million identified EB students (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). Recent data indicate that Florida has the third largest number of EBs in the United States or

approximately 300,000 identified EBs in grades K-12 (Florida Department of Education, 2017), with the majority representing Spanish speakers, the fastest growing demographic group in U.S. public schools (Fránquiz & Salinas, 2011; NCES, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Presently, about 50% of all school districts in the United States are classified as rural (Cicchinelli & Beesley, 2017), and one third of all public schools are located in rural areas (Ayers, 2011). Nonetheless, most of the investigations on education in the United States are conducted in urban or suburban schools (Williams & Grooms, 2016). Data sources suggest that about 600,000 EBs attend rural schools (Hussar et al., 2020; NCES, 2018). Rural EB students and educators lack access to human, material, and digital resources, such as highly prepared teachers and programs that use EBs' first language in learning (Azano & Stewart, 2015; Burton & Johnson, 2010; Lewis & Gray, 2016). These challenges reflect the need to understand who rural teachers and students are—i.e., their personal and professional life experiences and knowledges—and how to align said knowledges with high-quality EB instruction and programs for EBs. Work by Delgado-Bernal (2001) and Flores Carmona (2018) have argued that teachers' and students' academic knowledges are important for teaching and learning; however, they do not stand alone as “the everyday knowledge and life experiences of students,” teachers, and “their communities” matter for instruction (Flores Carmona, 2018, p. 46). Understanding who EB students and their teachers are recognizes how different cultures, epistemologies, and backgrounds shape EB education.

Over the last decade, research has illuminated the knowledge that teachers need to effectively teach language and content to EBs (often referred to as English learners or ELs). This knowledge puts an emphasis on the linguistic and cultural dimensions of schooling (e.g., Coady et al., 2011, 2016; de Jong et al., 2013; Gallagher & Haan, 2018; Turkan et al., 2014). For the most part, the research investigating TK for EB teaching and learning has been focused on what all teachers need to know and be able to do (Genesee et al., 2006; Goldenberg, 2013; Téllez & Waxman, 2006). Little

is known about teacher knowledge related to EB instruction and effective learning, especially in secondary school settings. Even when some states mandate the preparation of teachers, there is lack of substantial evidence that mainstream teachers actually engage in differentiated instructional practices for EBs (Coady et al., 2016; Coady et al., 2018; Coady et al., 2019; Ernst-Slavit & Poveda, 2011). The 1990 Florida Consent Decree outlined the preparation of all Florida teachers to work with EBs. This policy mandates English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) training for all teachers of EBs, both pre- and in-service. At the elementary school level, teachers must have 300 hours of professional preparation to work with EBs through five curricular areas: applied linguistics; cross cultural communication; testing and evaluation; ESOL methods; and curriculum and instruction. Secondary content teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors must have 60 hours, the equivalent to one graduate level, three-credit hour course. However, there is little evidence that Florida state requirements result in teacher changed practices (Coady et al., 2019). Moreover, there is no evidence of the impact on student learning as the achievement gap between EBs and non-EBs remains stagnant (de Jong, 2021).

There is a documented cultural and linguistic disconnect between rural teachers and EB students. U.S. rural teachers follow the general trend; they are primarily White, middle-class, monolingual, English-speaking females with a bachelor's degree (Flores & Claeys, 2019; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Nieto & Bode, 2012; NCES, 2020). The mismatch between teachers' and EB students' experiences results in numerous problems such as teachers and students misunderstanding each other and students feeling unmotivated (Carothers et al., 2019; Flores & Claeys, 2019; Nieto & Bode, 2012). Scholars have recognized the need for EB teachers to get acquainted with students' cultural backgrounds to tailor effective EB instruction (Coady & Escamilla, 2005; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Moll et al., 1992). Lucas and Grinberg (2008) have argued that teachers' exposure to multilingualism, such as studying a language other than English (LOTE), would serve as the basis to develop “affirming views

of linguistic diversity” and “an awareness of the sociopolitical dimension of language use and language education,” both central to support EBs in the classroom (pp. 612–613). Other bilingual education scholars have asserted that bilingual and Hispanic teachers possess multiple knowledges that inform their professional decisions which, in turn, positively affect the lives of EBs by improving their academic outcomes and experiences (Clewell et al., 2001; Delgado-Bernal, 2001; Okhremtchouk & González, 2014; Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

Research on secondary teachers of EBs needs greater attention because the demands of academic language are more complex in advanced grades (Bunch, 2010; Fang et al., 2006). Secondary EBs face a rigorous curriculum structure, including simultaneously developing academic language and English development in the content areas. Although research has demonstrated that EBs continue to be outperformed by non-EBs in state standardized assessments and that the achievement gap percentage increases in higher academic grades (Coady et al., 2018), the scholarship on what secondary teachers know, or need to know, to provide quality EB instruction has been largely absent (Faltis et al., 2010; Reeves, 2006, 2009). Furthermore, the personal and professional experiences of secondary teachers working with EBs have received little attention (Reeves, 2006) and secondary teacher preparation for EB instruction has been ignored (August & Shanahan, 2006). Thus, secondary teachers are likely to be unprepared to meeting the cultural and linguistic needs of EBs.

The U.S. educational system is faced with these challenges: (1) the rapid growth of EBs in the United States; (2) the shortage of well-prepared teachers; (3) the widely documented pattern of underperformance of EBs on state and national tests (Coady et al., 2018; Kieffer & Thompson, 2018); (4) the lack of empirical examinations of TK theoretical frameworks informing EB teaching and learning; (5) the limited scholarship on secondary TK and experiences working with EBs; and (6) the lack of understanding of how local, state, and national policies are shaping TK for secondary EBs. Educational research that illuminates the necessary

TK that will enhance secondary EBs’ academic performance is, thus, needed.

In addition, the existing body of literature regarding TK and its connection to the teaching of EBs in rural communities has been largely absent. Rural education scholars argue that teachers in rural communities must be familiar with both the strengths and challenges of rural places to develop a sense of place (Greenwood, 2013; Gruenewald, 2003; Howley & Howley, 2014; White & Reid, 2008). A teacher’s attention must be directed “to social processes, to the ways in which people live, work, play, desire, and hopefully, cooperate” in particular places (John & Ford, 2017, p. 13) and the role that rurality plays in education. The interaction among teachers’ personal and professional identities, informed by one’s life biographies and experiences, “contribute to the construction of an identity that is linked to a particular place” and, “how a person views herself both informs and is informed by a sense of place” (Reagan et al., 2019, p. 87). Preparation and professional development (PD) programs are needed to encourage teachers to get to know a place by becoming community researchers and understanding where they are in a way that extends beyond geographic location.

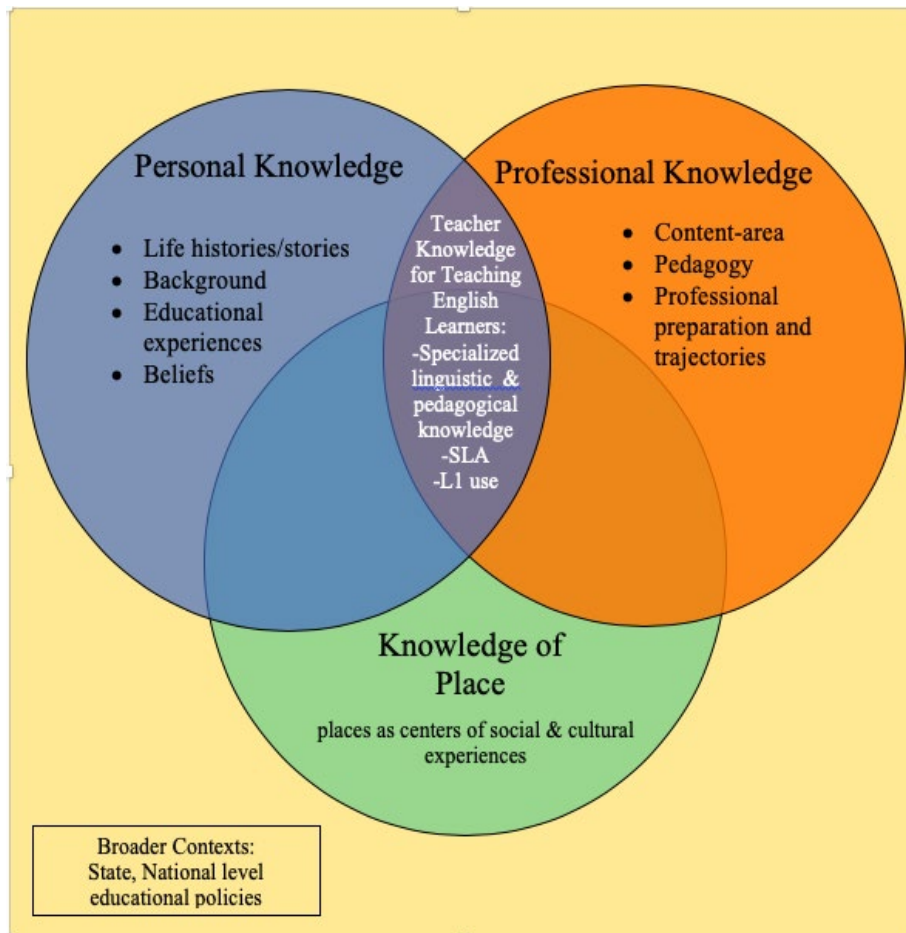
Rural settings pose additional specific challenges for EB students and educators, e.g., (1) limited educational funding due to a low property tax base (Azano & Stewart, 2015; Hansen-Thomas, 2018; Johnson & Zoellner, 2016; Reynolds, 2017); (2) the lack of well-prepared teachers in ESOL methods (National Rural Education Association [NREA], 2021); (3) the lack of language-focused education, misconceptions and deficit views about culturally and linguistically diverse students (Bunch, 2014; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Lee et al., 2007); (4) the influence of local, state, and national level educational policies on teachers’ work with EBs (Massey, 2020); and (5) a dearth of PD (Coady, 2020; Good et al., 2010; Manner & Rodriguez, 2012; Marlow & Cooper, 2008; Rodriguez & Manner, 2010). EB educators in rural school communities must accept educational responsibility for all EBs by developing a deep knowledge of place, i.e., an understanding of how community, geography, topography, diverse demography, way of life, and limited resources shape EBs’ education.

Although scholars in the field of EB education have an emerging knowledge base on how to prepare teachers for linguistic diversity (Coady et al., 2016), little is known about the intersection of rurality and EB education as a subfield in education research (Coady, 2020; NREA, 2021).

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine secondary TK related to the teaching and learning of EB students in a rural community. This study aimed to address shortcomings in the

academic literature on EBs and rural education with the goal of improving education for rural EBs. It also sought to examine the knowledge base upon which secondary teachers draw to improve education for rural EBs. The study addressed two main questions: (1) What personal and professional knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about teaching EBs in rural settings? and (2) What place-based knowledges do secondary teachers reveal about their work with EBs?

Figure 1
Study's Conceptual Framework



Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study consists of two components: TK and place-based education (Gruenewald, 2003). I theorize that TK of secondary teachers in rural settings is composed of three dimensions: personal (e.g., bilingualism, cultural, lived experiences); professional (e.g., content-area, professional preparation, and professional development); and place-based knowledges (e.g., rurality and community social processes) shaping each other in teachers' work with secondary EBs in a rural setting. In addition, I hypothesize that place is more than a backdrop or description of the work that teachers do; rather, place defines and shapes how people come to know and participate in the world.

First, a constructivist approach to TK frames the idea that teachers, in their professional work, are thinkers and creators of knowledge and that knowledge is mediated by personal experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Elbaz, 1983; Ernst-Slavit & Poveda, 2011; Mercado, 2002; Reeves, 2009). This constructivist perspective underscores the subjective and more personal nature of TK. Clandinin and Connelly's (1987) definition of TK or personal practical knowledge (PPK) highlights the influential role that teachers' moral and affective aspects play on their personal and educational experiences, which constantly interact with classroom events and are closely connected to the personal and professional narratives of teachers' lives.

After exploring literature on the personal–professional nexus in teaching (Golombek, 1998; Pedrana, 2009; Reeves, 2009), I posit that these areas are two essential components of the overall knowledge base of teachers that affect teachers' work with EB students. I argue that teachers do not cease to be personal when teaching, and their professional lives and experiences do not disappear when they leave school. Pedrana's (2009) study of Hispanic teachers of EBs underscored the direct influence that personal and educational experiences exert over who teachers are, what they teach, “and how they engage students in their learning” (p. 176).

The empirical research on the specialized TK for effective EB instruction focused mainly on what all teachers needed to know and do (Coady et al., 2016; Genesee et al., 2006; Goldenberg, 2013; Téllez & Waxman, 2006). Specific research on TK for effectively addressing secondary EBs was largely absent (Faltis et al., 2010; Reeves, 2006). Thus, I contend that the understanding of the relationship between TK and secondary EB instruction is still nascent.

Second, I investigated the role that place plays in shaping TK for EBs. As noted, the limited research on rural EB teacher education and practices illustrates the need for place-based education and clearer guidelines on the relationship between teacher education and EB learning. For instance, Good et al. (2010) found that cultural clashes and communication gaps impeded teachers' work with EBs in a rural community. Other rural EB scholars have demonstrated how knowledge of place directly influences teachers' work with rural EB students, heightening educators' advocacy stances and promoting their leadership and collaboration (Ankeny et al., 2019; Bustamante et al., 2010). Thus, I postulate that problematizing place is central for teachers to know and understand the specific “circumstances and specificity of rural education” (Green & Reid, 2014, p. 27) as places define and shape how people come to know and participate in the world. As Gruenewald (2003) remarked, “places themselves have something to say” (p. 624), and place-based TK holds promise for more effective instruction, advocacy, and equity for rural EB students and families. In this study, teachers' personal, professional, and place-based knowledges are used as a theoretical lens to understand how teachers know what they know about their work with EBs in this rural community. Figure 1 demonstrates the intersections of the study's conceptual components of the framework while Figure 2 shows the theoretical framework informing the study.

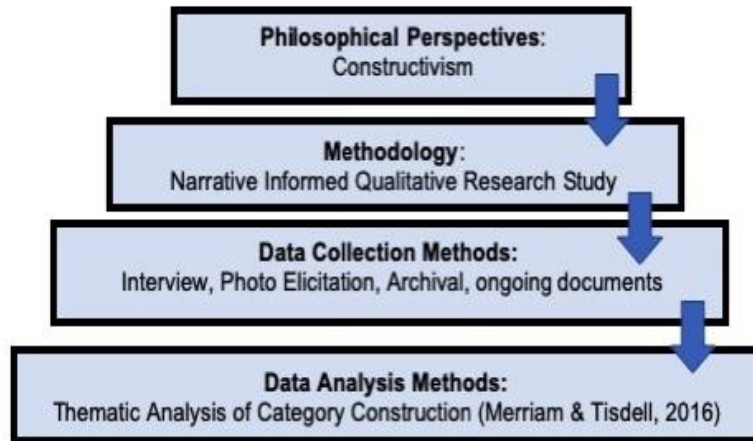
Figure 2

Theoretical Framework Informing the Study



Figure 3

Research Design



Methodology

Understanding TK in a rural setting and what teachers say they know about their work with EBs entailed the co-construction of participants' personal, professional, and place-based knowledges. This qualitative yearlong research study with four secondary teachers of EBs took place in a rural agricultural school district and used a narrative-informed qualitative research approach to data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to elicit narratives of personal, professional, and place-based experiences. Figure 3 describes the study's research design.

Research Context

Ivy County (pseudonym) had consolidated middle-secondary schools in three main towns: Hibiscus, Calla Lily, and Alamanda. The district had low numbers of EBs. At the time of the study, just under 200 EBs, or four percent of the students, across grades K-12 were identified as receiving ESOL services. The EB students were primarily Hispanic or Latinx from various Central American countries and Mexico, and about 94% were Spanish speakers. The families worked in peanut, hay bale, and equestrian industries and supported the economy through direct labor on the land (Marichal, 2020). The percentage of persons living at or below the poverty line in Ivy County was 20.8% (U.S. Census, 2017). At the time of the study, the EB students scored significantly below state averages on the standardized test and below state averages on the English Language Proficiency test, WIDA ACCESS 2.0. The teachers were identified based on prior participation in a place-based PD program, funded by the U.S. Department of Education (Office of English Language Acquisition, OELA).

The schools in which the study's participants worked followed the state-mandated requirements for the preparation of all teachers who worked with EBs (Florida Department of Education, 2017). The district's chosen model for EB instruction was a “mainstream inclusive classroom” model, also known as “Structured English Immersion” (Peregoy & Boyle, 2013) in which English was the medium of instruction. Following this model, teachers included EBs in all mainstream classroom activities and were required to differentiate their instruction in academic

content areas for EBs based on those students' various English language proficiency levels.

Participants

Employing purposeful sampling selection criteria (Patton, 2002), four secondary teachers in Ivy County who worked directly with EBs were recruited and selected. The selection criteria allowed me to select the teachers' school level, their personal and professional characteristics, and their experience with a rural setting and EBs. Although the goals of this study were aligned to the larger objectives of the PD program, the research questions and purpose for this study were developed independently of and were different from the overarching objectives of the PD program that involved teachers in a north Florida school district. The participants held an ESOL endorsement from the state of Florida or had earned professional points towards a state ESOL endorsement for secondary school level. Three participants (Adela, Jacqueline, and Marisol [pseudonyms]) were bilingual, two of them were Hispanic from Puerto Rico (Adela and Marisol) and one from the local community. All three were female secondary teachers. The fourth participant, Jack, was a monolingual English speaker, who had had some limited international travel experiences. At the time of the study, Jacqueline and Adela were Spanish teachers teaching 9-12 students while Jack was a ninth grade English/ Language Arts teacher. Like most educators in rural schools, Marisol performed multiple roles (Coady et al., 2019). While serving as an ESOL paraprofessional working with EBs during the day and assisting EB parents as requested, Marisol was also in charge of the Focus Lab classroom, teaching and supervising mainstream and EB students in grades 9-12 who were not meeting grade-level standards in regular classroom settings. Table 1 summarizes essential personal information of the participants.

Participants' information was gathered through interview data during Stage 1 and 2, specifically an exploration of participants' personal and professional knowledges, respectively, as well as their résumé and initial participant online survey. Participants were provided with electronic IRB-approved consent forms, and their confidentiality

was assured through the use of pseudonyms and de-identified data.

Data Collection

Primary data included four video-recorded interviews for each participant, and photo elicitation, which guided teachers’ storytelling (Harper, 2002). The interviews were conducted during the summer months as requested by the participants. Temporal data collection techniques were used (past, present, future) to illuminate teachers’ told narratives of their personal, professional, and place-based experiences via stories.

Secondary data consisted of archival documents such as online survey, teacher personal résumé, and field notes. These data sources were employed to focus “on process, understanding, and

meaning” and on obtaining “richly descriptive” data from the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15). Data collection and analysis lasted 25 weeks.

The interview process was divided in four stages using four interview protocols: (1) Stage 1: Personal Knowledge; (2) Stage 2: Professional Knowledge; (3) Stage 3: Knowledge of Place; and (4) Stage 4: Combined Questions Connecting All TK Dimensions. During the interviews, I invited participants to talk about the images they generated and to explain how the images embodied a personal, professional, or place-based experience. The participants’ interpretation of these photos served as prompts for verbal data, thus, providing data for subsequent analysis.

Table 1
Summary of Participants’ Essential Personal Characteristics

	Participants			
	Jack	Jacqueline	Marisol	Adela
Race/Nationality	White American	African American	White Hispanic	White Hispanic
Languages	Monolingual	Bilingual	Bilingual L1 Native	Bilingual L1 Native
Birthplace	Florida	Florida	NY	PR
Location of Upbringing	TN, rural	Florida, urban	NY, urban	PR urban-rural
Schooling	Master’s degree in Secondary English Education working toward Ed.D.	Bachelor’s degree	Bachelor’s degree, working toward a MAE	Bachelor’s degree, working toward a MAE
Yrs. of experience teaching	3	35	16	12
Yrs. of experience teaching in rural Ivy County	2	29	5	6

Table 2

Data Collected and Transcribed

	Interviews	Photo Elicitation	Documents Archival Online Survey, Personal Résumé, & Ongoing Documents
Jack	4 interviews Total time: 253 minutes (4.22 hrs.) 80 pp. transcribed data	10 pictures corresponding to the 3 major categories	Personal résumé Online survey 1 picture from ESOL Fair Data generated from email (1)
Jacqueline	4 interviews Total time: 287 minutes (4.80 hrs.) 102 pp. transcribed data	7 pictures corresponding to the 3 major categories	Personal résumé Online survey Data generated from email (2)
Marisol	4 interviews Total time: 240 minutes (4.00 hrs.) 85 pp. transcribed data	13 pictures corresponding to the 3 major categories	Personal résumé Online survey Data generated from email (2)
Adela	4 interviews Total time: 398 minutes (6.60 hrs.) 98 pp. transcribed data	7 pictures corresponding to the 3 major categories	Personal résumé Online survey 2 pictures from ESOL Fair Data generated from email (1)
Total	16 interviews 1178 minutes 20 hrs. 365 pp. transcribed data	37 participant-generated pictures	4 personal résumés 4 online surveys 3 researcher-generated pictures Data generated from email (6)

Microsoft Excel was used to store transcript data and a photo elicitation log. Initial open codes from across all the data sets (1066) were grouped into 20 axial codes, which were re-analyzed and compared using an iterative approach. A master list of codes was generated for each participant resulting in five major categories or findings addressing the two research questions. In this paper I discuss four findings related to the personal and place-based knowledges of the participants.

Positionality

I have played an active role in the completion of this yearlong narrative-informed qualitative study. As a White Hispanic secondary teacher of Spanish who was born and raised in Puerto Rico and educated in the United States, I recognize that my cultural and bilingual experiences may have influenced my work with rural EB teachers in this study. At the same time, my personal, educational, and professional experiences as a Puerto Rican in the United States have provided me with the necessary knowledges and impetus to conduct this study. First, my educational journey in the United States, often characterized by silence, racist and classist microaggressions (Solórzano, 1998, as cited in Delgado-Bernal, 2001, p. 623), has shaped the way I feel toward and empathize with EBs' education. Secondly, as a secondary Spanish teacher, I have learned that being authentic while building trusting relationships with students is central to advance and humanize the educational experience. Lastly, working with rural secondary teachers in rural Florida has allowed me to establish strong bonds with them as well as to understand their struggles in implementing ESOL instruction and considering the role that rurality plays in EBs' education. These experiences have shaped my work in this rural school community and the findings in this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Findings

Findings from this study demonstrated that participants' knowledges, e.g., personal, professional, and place-based, are to be understood as contextualized dimensions. The unique interconnectedness of these dimensions constantly guided teachers' professional work and informed the different approaches teachers

appropriate to enact instruction and build relationships with EBs. In this section, I describe findings related to the personal and place-based knowledges of the participants.

The Personal Dimension: Prioritizing Relationships De Corazón a Corazón

Participants highlighted two knowledges related to the personal and professional TK dimensions: (1) teachers' knowledge that their bilingualism, hispanidad (Hispanic ethnicity), and faith were resources for teaching EBs; (2) teachers' knowledge that conceptualizing emotional and authentic two-way relationships with EB students was a priority in their work with EBs. That is, teachers showed their authenticity by leveraging their bilingualism, ethnicity, and religious beliefs to build these relationships. Findings demonstrated that the participants' own constructions and understandings of their personal knowledge, e.g., their personal lived experiences, and backgrounds, were prioritized over their professional knowledge and experiences in their work with secondary rural EBs in this rural school community.

Bilingualism and Hispanidad: "A Very Big Plus"

The participants relied on their cultural and linguistic backgrounds and knowledges to inform cultural and instructional activities in the classroom. Jacqueline, Marisol, and Adela asserted that their bilingualism and hispanidad were resources for building communication with EBs that helped them to establish strong bonds with EB students. While Marisol and Adela leveraged their own bilingualism and hispanidad, Jacqueline, who is bilingual, embraced hispanidad while growing up and leveraged the EB students' hispanidad as a resource in relationship-building. The participants leveraged their bilingualism and hispanidad to learn about EBs' socioemotional and academic needs and to share aspects of their lives with them as well.

Growing up in an African American low-income family in south Florida, Jacqueline was exposed to cultural and linguistic diversity. She recalled, "being born in Palm Beach gave me exposure to Latinos because in our neighborhood at that time, [there were] Blacks and Latinos, not so much Whites." In

her neighborhood, the Latinos were mostly Cubans who spoke primarily Spanish. She learned quickly that speaking Spanish to the Hispanic elders made them feel at ease. Jacqueline was constantly exposed to different Spanish accents and, as she remembered, “it was what inculcated my interest in it.” She stated that her experiences with diversity and bilingualism are resources for her job as a Spanish teacher and her work with rural secondary EBs. Her bilingualism and embraced hispanidad allowed her to get to know students and families and to establish strong relationships with them, she explained,

Understanding a parent, family dynamic even is important. It can be difficult, because one...thing is the language barrier for many teachers...And a lot of parents simply withdraw from dealing with this school and the system unless something happens, unless something goes wrong. And that's not because they don't care about their child...[B]ut most of them, it was because they feel they can't, they have no power. They have no power in that place, so they have no standing in that place. (Jacqueline, Interview 2, June 27, 2019)

According to Jacqueline, being acquainted with hispanidad and being bilingual are personal assets and important resources for relationship-building in her work with EBs and their families.

In addition, Jacqueline realized that her bilingualism and exposure to languages and cultures growing up bridged cultural gaps in the classroom and facilitated the connections she made as EB teacher and teacher and mentor at her school. These experiences helped her to see “the whole picture” and to identify the academic and socioemotional needs of EBs that often go beyond language barriers (Jacqueline, Interview 1, 6/13/19). Jacqueline’s personal life experiences growing up in West Palm Beach prepared her to not only meet the academic and social needs of her EB students but also to mentor other English-speaking colleagues who lacked experiences with diverse student populations.

Likewise, Marisol was passionate about the work she has done with her EB students. A Neorican, a fusion of New York and Puerto Rican

heritage, Marisol was the first generation in her family to be born in the United States as both her parents were originally from the island of Puerto Rico. Her personal background combined with her hispanidad and bilingualism provided the confidence required to meet EBs’ academic and social needs. She remarked,

I think the biggest part of being confident is because I know the language. I'm able to communicate. . . There's a lot of kids that won't let you teach them because they don't feel comfortable. So, confident I am and it's mostly because of my [Hispanic] background. I think that's a very big plus.” (Marisol, Interview 2, June 24, 2019)

She explained how her cultural and linguistic background facilitates her work with EBs,

Meeting them, getting to know them first it is a heart to heart thing and if they know where I come from, then they know I understand where they come from. And that makes the first connection, and it makes it easier to teach them too. (Marisol, Interview 1, June 17, 2019).

By leveraging her bilingualism and hispanidad, Marisol prioritizes relationship-building *de corazón a corazón* (“heart to heart”) and lets her EB students “know where you are coming from as a teacher.” In an authentic way, Marisol establishes strong bonds with her EB students from day one.

Similarly, Adela, a certified Spanish teacher from Puerto Rico with twelve years of teaching experience who had been working in Ivy County since 2013, expressed that being Hispanic and bilingual were important resources in her teaching. She asserted that her strong connection with EB students stemmed from her puertorriqueñidad and her respect for all Hispanic cultures. When Adela spoke of her puertorriqueñidad, she referred to the different ethnicities and races that comprise the complex Puerto Rican ethnic and racial reality: the Taíno, Spanish, and African.

When I asked Adela to share a picture related to her personal background, Adela shared a photo of her favorite beach in our mutually beloved island of Puerto Rico (see Picture 1). The picture depicted a lighthouse in the distance, but what was evident

was the beautiful blue skies reflected on the water. Adela explained that she chose this picture because it symbolized for her the openness, the heart of our Boricua culture, and the essence of her hispanidad. Listening to Adela as I simultaneously looked at the photo, I could sense Adela’s feelings of pride and peace emanating from her oral description of the picture. Adela knew that her puertorriqueñidad guided her to create a classroom space in which students could sense the same happiness and welcoming feeling she experienced being close to the ocean in the island. She explained that the beach in Puerto Rico was her happy place. She

smiled and remarked, “la playa es mi lugar feliz, la sal, la arena. No sé, la gente lo identifica con limpieza, pureza, libertad....Viene y va, siempre regresa” “the beach is my happy place, the salt, the sand. I don’t know, people identify it with cleanliness, purity, freedom....It comes and goes, it always comes back” (Adela, Interview 1, June 28, 2019). A shared, common puertorriqueñidad forged a strong bond between us, and I understood how Adela was able to build that same connection with her students through her bilingualism, her puertorriqueñidad (hispanidad), and her deep knowledge of place.

Picture 1

Puerto Rico, the Island, the Sea, and the Peace: An Open Door for EBs. Photo courtesy of Marichal (2020).



She stated, “Como tú eres boricua [tú me entiendes], cuando tú vas a la playa y te sientas ahí, es como que—como una limpieza, como que tú le das al mar tu dolor y ella está ahí y te escucha, no sé. Y es mi lugar feliz, es mi lugar feliz, no sé” “Since you are boricua [you understand me], when you go

to the beach and sit down there, it is as if—as a cleanse, as giving the sea your pain and she is there, listening to you, I don’t know. And it is my happy place, I don’t know” (Adela, Interview 1, June 28, 2019). She added that recreating these

emotions in her classroom was one of her main goals as a teacher.

Jack, the monolingual participant from rural Tennessee, also noted the importance of being bilingual in that he failed to capitalize on learning the language when he had the opportunity early in life. He admitted,

I kind of kicked myself for, is not realizing how important it would have been for me to learn Spanish better, whenever I was in college . . . I really wish someone in the education program would have stressed the importance of being . . . You don't have to necessarily be bilingual, but being able to communicate with students, that's one of the hardest parts. . . . The students may be able to do this task, but it's going to take me an extra five to ten minutes to explain to them verbally, what exactly I would like for them to. (Jack, Interview 2, June 25, 2019)

Despite his stated language limitation, Jack also described the importance of building relationships by being an authentic teacher with his EB students. Although he acknowledged the difficulty of developing a relationship with Hispanic EBs, he knew that “you've got make those connections because a lot of times that's going to be how you make that difference” (Jack, Interview 3, July 4, 2019). Jack established relationships in creative ways using technology in pedagogy. Using dialogue journals and Google translate allowed Jack to share aspects of his personal life with his students as well as to learn about their Hispanic culture, lived realities, and educational inequities. Jack asserted that learning about his students' lives also let them know he cared for them. Moreover, getting to know each other in this way allowed Jack to use that information in his work with EBs in the classroom. Even though Jack could not leverage his own hispanidad, he recognized its importance, learned about it, validated it, and brought it into the classroom.

Faith

In addition to leveraging their bilingualism and hispanidad, Marisol and Adela revealed that their faith informed their work with EBs and the way they approached their relationship-building with them.

Knowing the deep faith of the community and guided by her personal spirituality, Adela acknowledged that she constantly prayed for her EB students' well-being and personal struggles, which allowed her to establish strong bonds with them. Using Revelations 3:8, Adela described, “hay como una historia bíblica que dice que tú bendices las puertas de tu casa, que todo el que entre reciba bendiciones. Es algo que yo acostumbro hacer mucho” “There is a Bible story that says that you bless the doors of your house and as people enter, they receive blessings. It is something I do a lot” (Adela, Interview 1, June 28, 2019). Every morning, she offered her blessings by touching EBs' backpacks as they entered her classroom door. She knew that her authenticity, faith, and caring pedagogy in the classroom was a source of comfort for students that allowed them to focus on their education.

Similarly, Marisol, guided by her personal religious belief and her deep knowledge of place and EB students, was able to display religious motifs in her classroom (see Picture 2). Marisol described her “shrine” or classroom back wall as a source of comfort for her EBs.

I put things that represent me. Sometimes I won't use words. I'll have a cross, I'll have butterflies, I'll have quotes of believe, dreaming, anything positive. The kids would walk into my room and they would have an idea of me without me even telling them about me at first.... I've always experienced that when the students walk into the classroom, and they looked around first, they had an idea of what type of teacher was in the room. At that moment, I started winning their trust, their respect without saying a word. (Marisol, Interview 3, July 3, 2019)

Picture 2

Marisol's shrine. Photo Courtesy of Marichal (2020).



Their deep spirituality and religious beliefs served as an additional source of knowledge that allowed Marisol and Adela to further develop a personal and emotional relationship with their EB students.

The Place-Based Dimension: Advocating for EBs

Regarding the participants' knowledge of rurality, two knowledges were most salient: (1) teachers' knowledge of the uniqueness of the rural community and (2) teachers' knowledge to be the voice of secondary EB students in this Florida rural school community. For example, teachers who grew up in rural communities had deep insider-knowledge of how the specific community functioned and how they could leverage that knowledge to advocate for rural secondary EBs.

The Uniqueness of the Rural Community

The participants revealed that each rural community was different, and the uniqueness of this rural community impacted their work with EBs. Jack recognized the uniqueness of rural communities in that rurality must not be overgeneralized because "there are intricacies to each place and each space" (Jack, Interview 3, July 4, 2019). Through the use of photo elicitation (see Picture 3), Jack was able to

contrast his experiences with rurality in Tennessee and Florida by asserting that the physical space in a rural community influences the lifestyle of that community.

He explained that in Ivy County,

[EBs] they've got to walk a farther distance to get to a bus stop to, to be picked up. And if they miss the bus, there's no catching a ride with someone else. . . . Whenever you missed the bus or whatever it may be then you are not going to school that day." (Jack, Interview 3, July 4, 2019)

Contrasting rurality in the rural south and Florida and reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of both areas, Jack was able to anticipate obstacles that geography imposed on his EB students' daily life as he engaged in this rural school community.

Findings from this study suggested that places are more than a geographical space or location. For instance, Jacqueline noted, "Place informs what you need to know" and repeatedly underscored the uniqueness of place. Jacqueline emphasized that Ivy County's insularity and the lack of access to intellectual stimuli, such as libraries and museums, resulted in a lack of access to certain types of knowledge.

Picture 3

Jack's childhood home in rural Amaryllis, TN. Photo courtesy of Marichal (2020).



She acknowledged that teachers as well as EB students come to Ivy County with different personal geographic backgrounds and entered their relationship together in this particular place. She described her priorities related to EBs' education,

I strive to comprehend and internalize the place. Your first place is your place, and that's another thing: we have to understand as teachers, these students, our ELs' [EBs'] first place, is their place. So, we have to teach them about this place. (Jacqueline, Interview 3, July 27, 2019)

Jacqueline underscored the need for teachers to problematize place and consider how it shapes their work with EBs and how it impacts their education.

Adela learned from her EB students the importance for teachers to internalize the uniqueness of place. Teachers need to understand that Ivy County's geography combined with its seasonal agricultural-based economy affected EB attendance to school. Having to travel long distances, lack of public transportation, and other EB-lived realities contributed to an increase in EB school absenteeism. For example, Adela named absenteeism as one of the most significant

problems experienced by EBs in their school. She contemplated,

El problema de ausentismo es real. No sé si es por la distancia...no sé si es como van a trabajar cuando llegan es tan tarde. Prefieren faltar a esa primera clase o llegar tarde al primer periodo. (The problem with absenteeism is real. I don't know if it is because they go to work and get home late. They prefer to skip that first class or be late to the first period.) (Adela, Interview 3, July 26, 2019).

Echoing Jack's, Jacqueline's, and Adela's assertions about teachers' awareness of the uniqueness of place, Marisol also underscored the need to get to know and understand place as it impacted their work as teachers in Ivy County. She elaborated,

This rural here is different from theirs where there's more houses. You still have campos [countryside] alrededor, but then you still have roads. You know, you may have vehicles over there, they may have horses, you know, the atmospheres would be different. (Marisol, Interview 4, July 22, 2019)

Marisol knows that one could not assume that the physical aspects of rurality were experienced in the same manner in every rural community because she understands that knowledge of rurality included the space and the social processes characteristic of that particular rural community.

The Voice of Secondary EB Students in This Rural Community

Participants asserted that their knowledge of the rural school community (e.g., insularity, access to material and financial resources, and the way of life) and their personal relationship with the EBs allowed them to recognize the existing inequities and deficit discourses towards EBs in the school. The participants recognized the marginalization that EBs were experiencing as they were "ignored and overlooked" by educators. They also recognized that EB families lacked power in that place. They understood this reaction was due to the educators' and school administrators' inability to communicate directly with EBs and families. Thus, participants felt empowered to serve as the voice of EBs in this rural community and felt a responsibility to mentor and lead other colleagues to advocate for the needs of EBs and their families in their school.

For example, Jack felt the responsibility to improve EBs' academic success as well as to increase their visibility in the school community by planning the implementation of a self-contained ESOL sheltered classroom and organizing a Hispanic awareness project. As noted, Jack

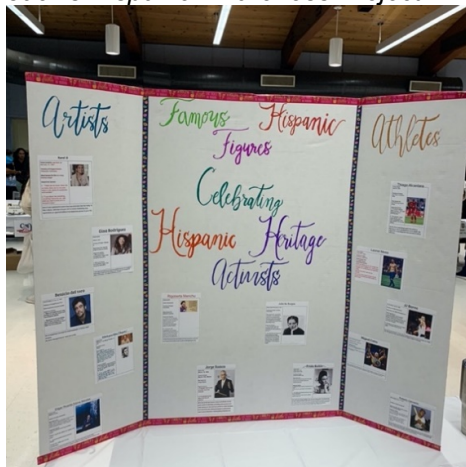
leveraged EB students' bilingualism and hispanidad through the design and integration of instructional activities that elevated and validated EBs' cultural heritage. He remarked,

I feel the responsibility. I don't feel like I've been able to step out yet. But I feel like I am an advocate for...Even like the language used or the keeping it to where it's something that we can constantly keep on our minds with our EL [EB] teaching practices, that is something that I tried to keep in the forefront of our school, and our instruction. (Jack, Interview 2, June 25, 2019)

For Jack, accepting the responsibility for EB education meant to successfully implement a self-contained ESOL classroom in which secondary EBs received specialized interventions with support from a full-time bilingual paraprofessional. Jack participated in several conversations with administrators to advocate for the academic and social needs of his EB students, and his request was granted. In the context of this classroom, he guided students in a cultural awareness project in which Hispanic EBs researched famous Hispanic artists, athletes, and writers and presented the projects at the school's annual ESOL fair (see Picture 4). Jack noted that some of his EB students learned for the first time about the work and lives of these important Hispanic personalities. As Jack described, EBs felt special and proud of their hispanidad and bilingualism while sharing the project with the entire school.

Picture 4

Jack's Hispanic Awareness Project. Photo courtesy of Marichal (2020).



The educational inequities experienced by EBs in Ivy County, such as lack of bilingual material, human resources, and information, underscored the need for teachers to advocate for EBs. Participants revealed that rurality impacted finances and funding for EB education. In Hibiscus Middle High School (HMHS), a school that three years prior to this study had been consolidated from a single middle and single high school, the larger class sizes resulted in less time dedicated to the education of EBs. Jacqueline observed,

Last year I had a class of 34 kids. Now if there's one kid who's sitting there quiet, when other kids are bombarding me with questions, I could lose that child. And if it's an EL [EB] child, he or she is not going to feel able to just speak out and speak up because that may not be where they came from. That's not how you do things. So, if you aren't given the time to focus on that child, it's a huge challenge. (Jacqueline, Interview 4, July 2, 2019)

Similarly, Marisol understood that the merging of schools combined with low teacher pay resulted in a lack of bilingual teachers who would facilitate the education of Hispanic EBs. She passionately explained,

That's why I believe we lose a lot of our teachers, you know, forget the pay. We get paid less than others. Yes, that's true. But it becomes very stressful. It becomes a physical hit. And then what happens? It affects our students. We're not there for our students. So now we have students that are below grade level that are not passing state testing. They're not being taught what they need to be taught. And I could keep going on and on, yeah, and, and speak about this, you know, that we have our issues for our rural and our ESOL kids. (Marisol, Interview 4, July 22, 2019)

Participants in this study acknowledged that the lack of bilingual teachers and material resources due to financial reasons had affected the education of EBs in Ivy County.

Recognizing the educational inequities experienced by her EB students, Jacqueline and Marisol felt the responsibility to keep EBs and their

families informed of school activities and important information regarding EB education. They requested that the school's administration add important announcements in Spanish on their school's marquee that was visible by anyone driving by the school. In an effort to include EBs and their families, Jacqueline and Marisol intended to keep parents informed of their children's school events as well as to elevate EBs' culture and language in the school (see Picture 5).

In the same way, Adela felt it was her responsibility to bridge cultural gaps between the school community and her EBs by creating instructional activities that valued EB students' home language and culture and empowered EBs. This was a way for Adela to not only learn from and build relationships with her EB students, but it was also a way to make EBs less invisible to school administrators, educators, and the rest of the students. Adela shared, "hay niños que te dicen: 'Uno aquí es como un fantasma,' están, pero no están porque nadie los ve, son invisibles." (There are children that say, 'here, one is like a ghost' They are there but they are not because no one sees them, they are invisible.) (Adela, Interview 2, July 5, 2019). She added,

Pero muchas de las cosas que hacemos, van más relacionadas para que ellos se identifiquen con su cultura, ¿entiendes? La comida de Guatemala, de El Salvador, de México, cuando hago mis celebraciones, ...trato de que ellos se vean representados, porque ellos no tienen esa oportunidad en otras clases. (Adela, Interview 1, June 28, 2019)

(A lot of the things we do, are related so that they identify with their culture. You understand? The Guatemalan food, El Salvador, from Mexico, when I do my celebrations, I try to include those countries, so they see themselves represented because they don't have that opportunity in other classes.) (Adela, Interview 1, June 28, 2019)

Picture 5.

Marquee Project by Jacqueline and Marisol.

Photo courtesy of Marichal (2020).



One of her most popular activities was the día de los muertos celebration (Day of the Dead), in which Mexicans honored their dead relatives. Adela would celebrate the Day of the Dead in her classroom every year during the month of November as her students looked forward to the event. Adela decided, with the help of some of her students, to showcase a sample of Mexican culture for the entire school at the ESOL fair by recreating the altar honoring the dead. They cooked favorite foods of their deceased families and brought pictures of them, candles, papel picado (tissue paper with cut-out shapes), and colorful sugar skulls.

The bilingual participants acknowledged serving as language and cultural brokers in the schools as needed. They served in this way during and after school hours at school-related activities and served as mentors to other teachers to facilitate EB instruction. All four participants asserted they have provided on-site coaching to teachers in their

school, bridging the cultural and linguistic gap between EB families and schools in Ivy County.

Reimagining TK for Rural Secondary EBs: The Relational Dimension

Both personal and place-based knowledges emerged in this study as having more prominent influence on TK and their work with secondary EBs in this rural school community. This occurred because teachers predicated their instructional work with EBs on authentic and emotional give-and-take or bidirectional relationships with secondary students as individuals. That is, teachers' personal and place-based knowledges mediated and were constantly mediated by participants' relational knowledge. Thus, relationships were central to teachers' knowledge-base of working with EBs and took precedence over teaching skills and strategies (Marichal, 2020). Findings from this study showed how the various dimensions of TK (personal, professional, and place-based) informed the teaching and learning process for rural secondary teachers of EBs. A fourth knowledge dimension

emerged from the data: relational teacher knowledge. These four dimensions constantly informed teachers’ instructional approaches in their work with EBs. Based on the findings, a four-dimensional TK model is proposed (see Figure 4).

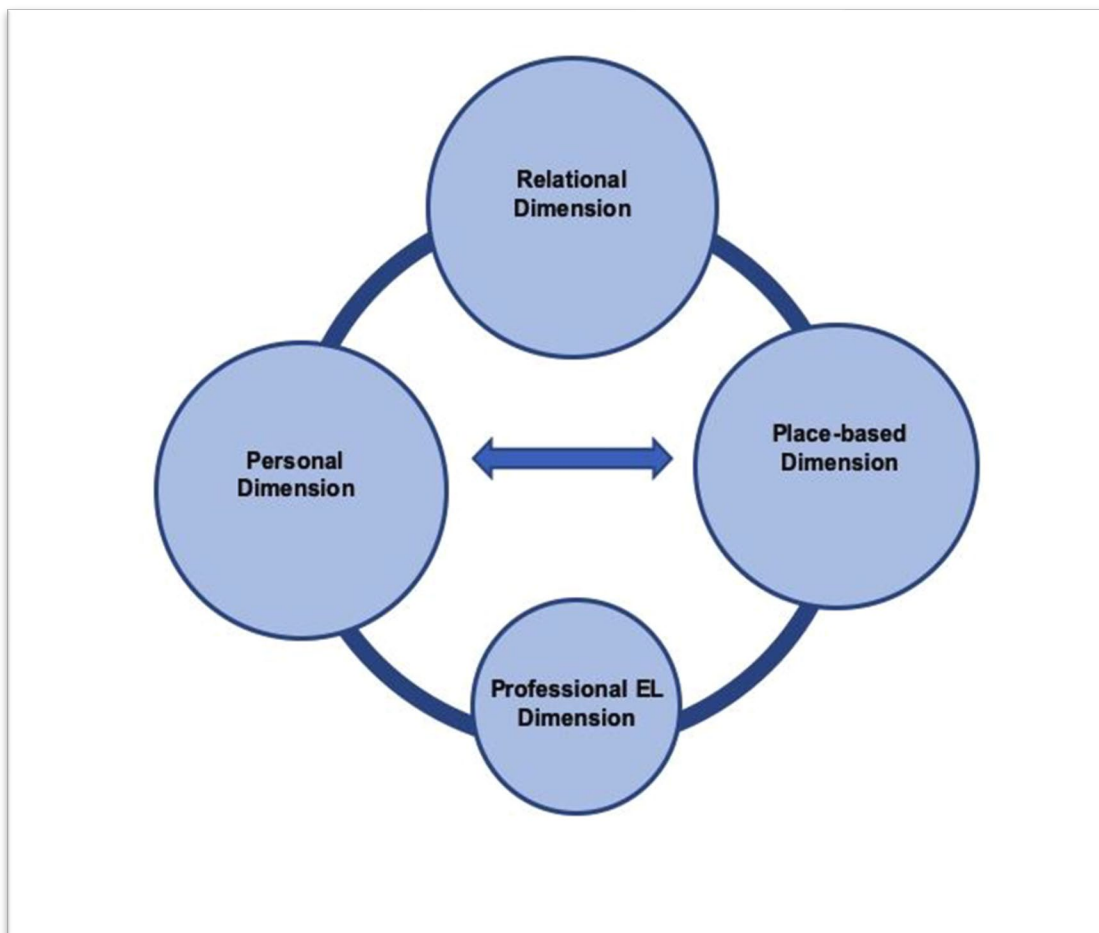
Discussion

Findings from this study underscore the prominent influence of participants’ personal cultural and linguistic backgrounds on their work with EBs in this rural school community. The four participants in the study acknowledged that teachers’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds were assets in building relationships with EBs and

families. Reeves (2009) showed that teachers’ individual characteristics and their personal experiences—bilingualism, diverse cultural and linguistic experiences, certain personality traits, and positive attitudes toward EBs—and played a role on the teachers’ knowledge-base for teaching EBs. While Marisol and Adela asserted that their own bilingualism and hispanidad were resources for communication with EBs, allowing them to make connections and to establish strong bonds with students to attend to the whole child, Jacqueline and Jack recognized and leveraged their EBs’ hispanidad and bilingualism, bringing it into the classroom.

Figure 4

Dimensions of Teacher Knowledge and Rural Secondary EBs (ELs)



The participants also relied on their cultural background to inform instructional activities in the classroom, elevating their students' heritage. Jacqueline's embraced hispanidad and her own bilingualism allowed her to communicate with students and families one-on-one in their home language to identify EBs' emergent needs beyond their bilingualism, such as learning disabilities or emotional issues. Jack recognized the importance of being bilingual in that he failed to capitalize on learning another language when he had the opportunity early in life. Nevertheless, his drive and perseverance allowed him to find other creative ways of accessing linguistic resources to learn about his EBs' hispanidad.

What was crucial in these teachers' attempts to construct authentic relationships with their students was that they not only tried to learn about the students but also shared relevant experiences about themselves with their students. While the EB literature has emphasized the need for teachers to have a "contextual understanding" of EBs' linguistic and cultural backgrounds (de Jong et al., 2013, p. 95) or a "personal knowledge of the EBs in their classrooms" (Coady et al., 2011, p. 226), the findings from the present study illuminate the importance of the bidirectional sharing of personal experiences in the development of a teacher-student relationship. That is, the findings from this study regarding the relational dimension of a teacher's knowledge went beyond a checklist or description of what to do in acquiring knowledge about their secondary EB students as the previous EB literature had suggested (Coady et al., 2011; de Jong et al., 2013; Gallagher & Haan, 2018).

The importance for bilingual and Hispanic teachers to build these personal relationships of mutual trust or *confianza* have been recognized by multiple scholars over decades of research (e.g., Delgado-Bernal, 2001; Ellis, 2006; González & Moll, 2002; Okhremtchouk & González, 2014). Okhremtchouk and González (2014) underscored the Hispanic teachers' reliance on their hispanidad and bilingualism for making their instruction relevant to EBs. Findings from their study on the perspectives of Latino teachers in Arizona aligned with the findings in the current study regarding the prominent influence of teachers' personal

backgrounds on their work with EBs. Similarly, Villegas et al. (2012) acknowledged that the positive influence Hispanic teachers exerted over students stemmed from cultural and linguistic experiences (e.g., way of interaction, use of time and space, and other conversational patterns) that were like those of their EB students.

Participants in this study demonstrated that the personal knowledge of the Hispanic teachers connected to their deep knowledge of the rural community, informing the way to construct mutual caring (*con cariño*) relationships with their Hispanic EBs. Supporting this finding, Valenzuela (1999) described an authentic form of caring necessary to educate Hispanics that "emphasizes relations of reciprocity between teachers and students" (p. 61). Authentic care, as described by Valenzuela, transcends the notion of supportive relationships. Valenzuela underscored the need for teachers to incorporate actions that include genuine consideration of the person being cared for and their capacities. In building connections with secondary EB students, the teachers in this study showed *cariño* (affection), love, caring, and empathy *de corazón a corazón* toward students' lived experiences as they developed their mutual caring relationships. As Nieto (2005) explained, "caring has included not only providing affection (*cariño*) and support for students, but also developing strong interpersonal relationships with students and their families," which included respecting and affirming their linguistic and cultural backgrounds while building on those to enhance teaching and learning (p. 32). In a similar vein, Delgado-Bernal (2001) recognized the importance to acknowledge, value, and further develop the cultural knowledge and lived experiences of teachers and students as they negotiate their identities in relationship with language, culture, communities, and spiritualities while engaging in the educational process.

For EB students, having a teacher of the same cultural and linguistic background as their own may not only offer a sense of belonging, affirmation, and pride but also supports learning through the cultural knowledge the teacher brings into the classroom. These informal or cultural knowledges taught within one's household by one's parents, which are usually not recognized or validated as formal knowledge,

are what Delgado-Bernal (2001) calls *pedagogies of the home*. In this study, all participants, including Jack, who integrated Google translate technology to communicate bilingually with his EBs, used Spanish as self-affirmation of their EB's culture to engage them in the relationship-building process, which was prioritized over their instructional knowledge. In addition, the bilingual participants acknowledged serving as language and cultural brokers during and after school hours at school-related activities and as mentors to other teachers to facilitate EB instruction. All four participants asserted they have provided on-site coaching to teachers in their school, bridging the cultural and linguistic gap between EB families and schools in Ivy County. Hooks (1994) acknowledged that educators who embrace the challenge to enter in a relational dimension are “better able to create pedagogical practices that engage students, providing them with ways of knowing that enhance their capacity to live fully and deeply” (p. 21). Likewise, Okhremtchouk and González (2014) recognized the need for bilingual and Hispanic teachers to challenge the system by “showing resistance and creating safe places for their students in the classroom environment that they can control and where they can make a difference” (p. 31).

Scholars have recognized that religion plays a role in the personal lives of people in the United States and in teachers' personal lives (White, 2009; Woodward & Mazumdar, 2005). Clandinin and Connelly's (1987) definition of personal practical knowledge (PPK) had underscored the moral and affective aspect of teachers' personal knowledge and its influential role in their professional lives. Along the same lines, Noddings (2005) suggested that a moral orientation in education or a relational ethic of caring presumed that human relationships are characterized by affective and reciprocal encounters. Noddings (2005) further suggested that “who we are, to whom we are related, and how we are situated” matter to develop a relational ethic of caring in education (p. 21). Delgado-Bernal (2001) argued that spirituality plays an important role in the development of one's identity as it is part of our cultural knowledge and incorporated into our daily practices. She found that some of the women in her study directly connected their spirituality to their

educational journey, their learning, or the desire to help others. Like Marisol's description of her shrine in her classroom, one of Delgado Bernal's participants described her spiritual practice of keeping a picture of the Virgin and a candle in her dorm room, “Well actually *en mi room tengo un picture de La Virgen y también tengo una veladora*” (p.634). Adela and Marisol acknowledged that religion was a source of guidance in their work with EBs and played a significant role in building teacher–EB student relationships.

Along with participants' personal knowledge, their place-based knowledges emerged as a prominent component of TK in this rural school community, constantly interconnected to participants' personal knowledge and informing the relational dimension of TK. Reagan et al. (2019) have noted the sustained influence of the literature on place-based and place-conscious approaches to education in which scholars recognized the specificity and complexities of places (Greenwood, 2013; Gruenewald, 2003; Shamah & MacTavish, 2009; White & Reid, 2008). Findings from this study aligned with Gruenewald's (2003) research on place-conscious approaches to education when he remarked, places “teach us” and “make us” (p. 621) and “themselves have something to say” (p. 624). That is, places are unique and rich in human–world relationships; people make and shape places and places shape and make people.

The literature on rural education over the last decade has emphasized the importance of the uniqueness of place or problematizing “place-as-identity” or “thisness” focusing on what happens in *this* school, *this* place as opposed to *that* one (Thomson, 2000, as cited in Green & Reid, 2014, p. 33). John and Ford (2017) have underscored the significance of the relation among place, space, and location. They recognize that “the place in which one engages in the educational relationship and process impacts the educational experience” and may pose “problems, issues, possibilities, and constraints that are specific to particular places” (pp. 12-13). Findings from this study revealed, through the participants' voices, the importance of recognizing the influential nature of the rich human interactions that constantly enlighten teachers' place-based knowledges and that interact with their

personal and relational knowledges informing their work with EBs.

All participants, aware of the inequities confronted by EBs in Ivy County, repeatedly emphasized that they felt empowered and responsible to be their voice, increase their visibility, and serve as advocates and mentor-teachers to other colleagues in their rural school. Adela, Jack, Jacqueline, and Marisol reflected on their practices, collaborated, and led others to build a stance for advocacy for their culturally and linguistically diverse students. Scholars have observed that educators in rural areas must serve as advocates for EBs in their schools (Ankeny et al., 2019; Bustamante et al., 2010; Coady, 2019; Hansen-Thomas, 2018; Marichal, 2021). For instance, Palmer (2018) found that bilingual teacher-leaders of EBs were reflective of their practices and engaged in ongoing inquiry, collaborated with colleagues in co-constructed ways, and advocated for educational equity and change on behalf of their bilingual students. Aligning with Freirean pedagogy in that action or performed activism is predicated upon critical reflection, the reflections provided by this study’s interviews allowed participants to discuss their emerging activism such as serving as mentors to other colleagues, as cultural brokers, and as leaders who created instructional activities, initiated new curriculum and school presentations for EB students that had the potential to change EBs’ educational outcomes.

Conclusion and Implications

What emerges from the findings of this study is that the teachers’ personal knowledges, informed by their knowledge of the rural community in which they work, highlighted the need for building authentic relationships with their EB students prior to enacting their professional knowledge. The unique interconnectedness of the four TK dimensions as shown in Figure 4 constantly informs the different approaches teachers appropriate to enact their EB instructional knowledge. As a result, teachers and EB students co-constructed their relationships as they engaged in their work in Ivy County. This relational process is central to understand and enact teachers’ professional EB TK in *this* rural school community. Thus, the findings in

this study suggested that *who* teachers are and *where* they come from as well as *who* their students are and *where* they came from in *this* rural place mattered for enacting a TK for secondary EBs in Ivy County rural community. In other words, the personal experiences and knowledges of teachers mattered as much as their place-based experiences and knowledges in shaping their own professional work with secondary EBs in a rural community, blurring the lines between the teachers’ personal, professional, and rural community identities.

Findings from this study add to the limited literature on secondary teachers of EBs and ruralify and illuminate the complexities of TK in EB secondary rural settings in several ways. First, this study builds theory to drive practice and proposes a new model that demonstrates the connections of teachers’ personal, professional, and place-based knowledges of rural secondary teachers of EBs. The model demonstrates that teachers’ personal and place-based TK dimensions constantly inform and shape each other and highlights the centrality of the relational dimension that transcended existing one-way dynamics suggested by EB literature (Coady et al., 2011; Gallagher & Haan, 2018). Participants revealed that EB teachers need to conceptualize teacher–EB student relationships through authentic and loving pedagogy to engage EB students in education. Building relationships for EB teachers in *this* rural community was a two-way dynamic that entailed opening their hearts in authentic dialogue with the students as EBs shared aspects of their lives with them. The relevance of teachers’ relational knowledge is an important contribution to the EB TK field. Future longitudinal studies that illuminate how teachers’ and students’ personal lives, backgrounds, and experiences interact in a particular place while informing teachers’ professional work in rural school communities are needed.

Findings from this study revealed that place matters for the education of rural secondary EBs. As Greenwood (2013) posited, neglecting place overlooks “the historical, political, and cultural processes that work to shape what places become” (p. 2) and ignores the uniqueness, diversity, and *joie de vivre* of rural communities. Place, specifically rurality in this study, has a different meaning for

teachers and EBs and impacts classroom dynamics. The findings from this study indicate that as teachers engage with the rural school community, they bring with them their personal and place-based knowledges that constantly shape each other, dictating the professional identities and instructional decisions in their work with EBs. This is a call to all rural researchers and a reminder that “the more we know about rurality, the less we know, it seems, and, as the old saying goes, if you have seen one rural community, you have seen . . . well, one rural community” (Corbett, 2016, p. 278).

The four-dimensional model derived from the findings suggest that increasing teachers’ rural knowledge and experiences as well as providing a space for teachers’ personal reflexivity as they engage in a new place is paramount for rural secondary EBs in north Florida. Future research exploring teachers’ reflections on how they develop authentic teacher-student relationships are warranted. In addition, further studies that explore more deeply the role that religion and race play in building these relationships are also suggested.

In addition to offering a theoretical contribution, findings from this study serve to raise consciousness about the educational preparation of secondary EB teachers in rural communities. The findings from this study inform and empower teacher preparation and PD programs to shift their stress from uniquely emphasizing professional instructional knowledge to a richer exploration and extension of teachers’ personal and place-based knowledges. As Eppley (2009) suggested, educators’ attention must be directed to the specific culture not only of their new school but also of the rural community itself. A place-conscious (Greenwood, 2013) or ‘place learning’ (Eppley, 2009) approach to education that rejects decontextualized teacher education, must be embedded within rural teacher education programs and field experiences with the goal to foreground social, spatial, cultural, and historical contexts and to understand how the context impacts the educational experience. Rural EB scholars have demonstrated that as educators become reflective about the environments that sustain inequities, place-based knowledge can transform education for rural EBs while becoming EBs’ advocates in their

schools (Ankeny et al., 2019; Marichal, 2020, 2021; Marichal et al., 2021).

Educators must leverage the prominent role Hispanic and bilingual teachers play in the lives of EBs. Catalysts in building personal relationships of mutual trust or *confianza* with EBs and their families, Hispanic/bilingual educators have unique capacities, often unrecognized, in advancing the educational trajectories of their EB students (e.g., Delgado-Bernal, 2001, Flores & Claeys, 2019; Flores Carmona, 2018; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). The ever-increasing linguistically diverse demographic shifts particularly in rural settings, the critical shortage of well-prepared bilingual educators (e.g., Carothers et al., 2019; Flores & Claeys, 2019) nationally, and the persistent academic achievement gap between native and non-native speakers of English require more granular preparation and place-based education for teachers of EBs. Educators in teacher preparation and PD programs must work toward diversifying the teacher workforce and narrowing the experiential mismatch of teachers and EBs, specifically in rural communities.

Furthermore, empirical studies in the context of PD programs must document EB teachers’ critical thoughts about the possibilities of developing an advocacy stance for EBs particularly in rural school communities. Drawing upon the work by Biddle and Azano (2016), to better understand the complexity and vivacity of rural communities is to understand the lived realities of students, teachers, and community members within the context of a school as the “social realities of that place determine the opportunities and constraints of schooling” (p. 316). This research suggests the importance for educators to possess an integrated vision of rural community and EB education so as to support research in rural EB teacher education that builds upon the complexities of particular places.

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