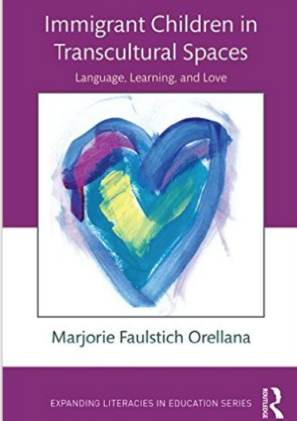




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<p><i>Immigrant Children in Transcultural Spaces: Language, Learning, and Love</i> Marjorie Faulstich Orellana Series: Expanding Literacies in Education Routledge, New York, NY (2016) Pages: ix +166 ISBN: 1-1388-0495-9 Cost: \$ 49.95</p> <p><i>Reviewed by Natalia Ward</i> The University of Tennessee, Knoxville</p>	
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Today, the American education system faces a number of trends ranging from standardization to increasing student diversity. While scholars, educators, and families are working towards reconciling how to embrace the diversity within the parameters of existing mandates, the perspective of children is often missing. *Immigrant Children in Transcultural Spaces: Language, Learning, and Love* by Marjorie Faulstich Orellana brings children to the forefront of educational discussions by asking:

“What kind of world might they build if we gave them more freedom to play, invent, imagine, and dream, then helped them cultivate the tools they already have, supported their visions, and sometimes, perhaps, just got out of their way?”
(p. 8)

Couched within sociocultural and sociohistorical learning theories, each of the eleven chapters provides a look inside the rich multi-dimensional context of an after-school club program, B-club, located in the heart of Los Angeles, where immigrant children from a variety of backgrounds engaged with language and literacy in a number of innovative ways. From an ethnographic stance the book explores how the ideas of children and young adults fit within the adult-defined world.

Chapter 1 situates B-club within the current environment of stringent anti-immigration laws and “hate-filled xenophobic and racist rhetoric” (p. 8) that alienate groups of immigrants and deny their rights. The ideas borders and border crossing are introduced not just in geographical terms, but also as they relate to ideas, groups, languages, and genres.

Chapter 2 and 3 describe B-club in more detail as a space different from home and school, with its own *acuerdos* (rules), where young adults and kids learned together. The undergraduate students participating in B-club were enrolled in a university course that

introduced them to sociocultural learning theory and ethnographic methods of research and required them to participate in B-club in addition to on-campus classes. Through interactions with kids, participating adults discovered as much about themselves, as they did about teaching and learning. Looking deeply at the ways they perceived the world around them transformed university students' ideas of children and communities, realigned their positions and views, and opened their hearts and minds to different possibilities.

Chapter 4 and 5 dive into the sociocultural and sociohistorical learning theories that underpin the conceptualization and day-to-day routines of B-club where learning was focused on kids' potential and the conditions to nurture it. Here, the notion of the zone of proximal development, frequently described as a characteristic of each individual, is redefined as “a *quality* of engagement” (p. 43). The adults in B-club looked for and capitalized on ZPD moments while students were involved in creative play and meaningful activities.

“At B-Club children didn't *practice* reading, writing, or building structures, by doing bits or pieces of the whole activity. They *actually* read, wrote, and built. And they read, wrote, and built *real things*: things of utility and beauty that connected them to others, to their minds, bodies, and spirits, and to the world.” (p. 45, emphasis in the original)

True to the title and the purpose of the book, Orellana emphasizes the importance of love and nurturing in human interactions and in learning. Without deep connections, learning is not possible. The author problematizes the “banking” model of education, where learners are considered empty vessels in need of their teacher's wisdom, and introduces Joseph Jacotet's method of equality as an alternative. Jacotet argued that students could learn by themselves, if moved by their own desire or interest. Thus, the teacher's job is to create conditions for that passionate interest, or flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008), to arise. In B-club, all efforts were made to spark children's interest. Kids lit up when offered opportunities to make personal connections, whether it was the places they visited or food they enjoyed.

Chapter 6 describes how children and adults of B-club saw the communities around them. Unlike the photographs and descriptions produced by adults who focused on the poverty and visual landscape, the kids emphasized the relationships with people who lived and worked in their community. Children took photos of things that made them happy. They saw love. Chapter 7 elaborates on the ideas of love and connects them to B-club where children wrote love letters, kept dialogue journals, and researched things that peaked their interest (e.g., a phone app “Talking Angela”). Adults and kids also discussed and questioned assumptions and opinions, stretching one another's views and beliefs beyond a single perspective in a safe environment.

The book argues that taking up multiple perspectives is essential for transcultural competency, which is discussed in Chapters 8, 9, and 10. Transculturality is “a movement *beyond* borders, a transformation of things that were being held apart, or artificially

constructed as separate and distinct” (p. 91). Defining culture as everyday lived practices, the author urges readers to question ontologies underpinning our perceptions of differences or similarities. While often portrayed through the deficit lens, kids growing up in multilingual communities possess valuable competencies, such as seeing things from the perspective of others and brokering language and culture. Translanguaging skills in multi/bilinguals’ communicative toolkits afford linguistic flexibility invaluable for making sense of things and for conveying meaning.

In addition, collective translanguaging calls for group members to utilize all of their resources to communicate within and across groups. Participants in B-club spoke language(s) they were comfortable speaking at the moment, supporting one another along the way, and everyone seemed to get a sense of the conversation. While English, a hegemonic language, often times dominated, B-club participants also chose to use their other language(s) by opting out to speak just that language in spite of their competencies in English, translating for friends, teaching them the new language, and playing with language(s). Without anyone policing such multilingual exchanges, they became normalized and unproblematic. They further extended into reading and writing, where transliteracies developed through a complex use of strategies and meta-linguistic awareness.

Orellana urges readers to see these complexities and competencies as a place to begin instruction. She advocates for a teaching approach that is responsive to students’ strengths in the moment-by-moment interactions. Such interactions require a sort of disciplined improvisation acquired through experience with actual kids in real contexts over time.

Chapter 11 brings the book together and addresses imagined possibilities of teaching and learning that go beyond accountability, possibilities where kids are not restricted by physical space or linguistic borders, possibilities where learning is fun:

“Practices at B-club were designed to *animate* our collective hearts, minds and spirits. We didn’t try to “get” kids to learn particular things, but instead sought to move *with* them into a kind of “flow” experience. We also put our attention on what we all wanted to be together: safe, responsible, respectful, understanding, friendly, supportive, and kind.” (p. 130)

Immigrant Children in Transcultural Spaces is not just a cultural celebration, but also a loud call for equity and attention to children and families that are often forgotten. If all educators, researchers, and policy-makers made an effort to see the world and education through the eyes of children, saw not just with their minds but also hearts, crossed the borders to discover the multidimensional nature of multilingual and minoritized communities, all children would be successful and the world would become a better place. The book does not answer all of the pressing issues in education, but instead offers a glimpse into what a place where languages, learning, and love are embraced and celebrated can look like.