

## **Persisting, Coping, & Advocating: Online Trauma of Latina Bilingual Pre-Service Teachers**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the online traumatic experiences of bilingual Latina pre-service teachers. Tasked with developing content for their students, while also being students themselves, positions them in a very particular and stressful situation imbued with multiple forms of trauma. This qualitative study considers the lived experiences of eight bilingual pre-service teachers in California and Texas. Utilizing narrative inquiry, from a grounded theory perspective, this study examines how Latina pre-service teachers worked through the online challenges of the pandemic and other traumas such as isolation, lack of academic engagement, vicarious trauma, and sense of powerlessness. Despite these challenges, participants were able to persevere in empowering ways and advocate for their students. Findings suggest the need for reimagining teacher education programs addressing the challenges faced by future teachers as they navigate the online space in their dual roles of both student and educator. Implications for practice, policy, and research are presented.

**Keywords:** Latina, online trauma, teacher education, bilingual certification, pre-service teachers, higher education

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The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have an adverse effect on our day-to-day lives, and one of the areas that has been significantly impacted is education. The disruption in classroom practices has occurred in both the delivery modality as well as the learner's engagement with material. The mandated stay-at-home orders forced teachers to quickly adapt their curricula to online delivery in real time. Students at all

levels of education became distance learners irrespective of their preference, capacity to learn online, or access to necessary technology. The focus of this study is a unique population whose members were simultaneously educators and students: teacher education pre-service teachers also doing student teaching. In this study, we defined a pre-service teacher as a person who is enrolled in a teacher preparation program, completing coursework, student teaching, and seeking state licensure. Specifically, we investigated the experiences of bilingual Latina pre-service teachers in Texas and California, where there is a shortage of, but high need for, bilingual teachers. In our search, there were no studies that examined the online trauma of bilingual Latina pre-service teachers.

The U.S. is experiencing a shortage of bilingual teachers, with states like California and Texas unable to fill the demand for permanent, full-time teaching positions seeking bilingual teachers (Horn et al., 2021; Ramos Harris & Sandoval-Gonzalez, 2017; Torre Gibney et al., 2021). For example, in the mid-1990s, California employed 1,200 to 1,800 credentialed teachers with the bilingual authorization, which dropped an estimated 65% by the 2015-2016 academic year, to where there were only 700 bilingual teachers, not nearly enough to support the 1.6 million emergent bilingual children in California public K-12 schools (Ramos Harris & Sandoval-Gonzalez, 2017). Similarly, the shortage of bilingual teachers has been prevalent in Texas for decades (Horn et al., 2021). It is necessary to consider the historical ramifications that have impacted bilingual education in the United States to clearly understand the shortage of bilingual teachers in states like California and Texas. The primary purpose of this study is to understand the online trauma that bilingual (English- and Spanish-speaking) Latina pre-service teachers experience as they navigate their dual roles as credential students and student teachers. The following research questions guide the study:

1. How do bilingual Latina pre-service teachers define trauma?
2. What are the internet-mediated traumatic events bilingual Latina pre-service teachers experience in their role as students?
3. In what ways do bilingual Latina pre-service teachers support their own students to cope with online trauma in their role as educators?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Trauma is a subjective experience that occurs when an individual undergoes a stressful life event or events that cause emotional or physical harm or can be perceived as being threatening or overwhelming (SAMHSA, 2014). Trauma can be experienced directly or vicariously (Adams et al., 2001; Miller & Flint-Stipp, 2019); this harm may have far-reaching consequences on one's life, possibly impairing one's physical, emotional, social, or spiritual health (SAMHSA, 2014). With the sudden onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, individuals experienced trauma because of this stressful life event as there was an actual threat to their own lives and that of others (Santamaría et al., 2021). The stress associated with the pandemic has had major implications for the mental health and well-being of individuals across the world (Boden et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2022; Xiong et al., 2020). For teachers, this threat was unique in that

rapid changes to the delivery of education to an online format had to occur to meet the ever-changing needs of students and school districts (Pressley et al., 2021). This was compounded by some teachers' sentiments of being at the mercy of state and local policies, feeling forced to put their own lives at further risk (Slavin & Storey, 2020).

High levels of stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, and sleep disturbances have been reported in teachers during the time of the pandemic as a result of having to teach online (Al Lily et al., 2020; Besser et al., 2022; Santamaría et al., 2021). The stress that resulted from the sudden switch to online education was particularly daunting for teachers, many of whom were without strong training in distance education delivery. For some, the rapid switching back and forth between teaching modalities as well as other shifts in job duties had an impact on their mental health, well-being, and functioning (Pressley et al., 2021). To date, there are no studies that have examined this specific context for bilingual teachers and the trauma of moving classes online, much less for Latina pre-service teachers. This needs to be further examined to address a call to higher education in which trauma-informed practices should be taken into account when working with students (Hunter, 2022).

Online trauma experiences occur when the internet mediates harmful exposure to violence such as cyberbullying, exposure to violent images, topics, and dialogue while in online arenas as well as vicariously witnessing these types of things in online settings (Arthur, 2009; Byrne, 2020; Byrne & Hollingsworth, 2021). For individuals of color, this exposure can be particularly problematic when faced with multiple forms of oppression in the online space (Duggan, 2017). During the COVID-19 pandemic, pre-service teachers rapidly shifted to online platforms which brought them into the online space as part of their professional roles more than ever. This more frequent exposure to online spaces, including conducting teaching of students and receiving learning as part of their training programs may have introduced a heightened risk for online trauma exposure. We will explore this specific form of trauma in the present study with a sample of bilingual Latina pre-service teachers.

## **METHODS**

This narrative inquiry qualitative study (Mertova & Webster, 2020) examined the lived experiences of eight bilingual Latina pre-service teachers in California and Texas. We utilized grounded theory (Creswell & Poth, 2018) as it seeks to discover new knowledge in an area of study that is under-researched. It is generated from systematically using comparative analysis. This method is appropriate when little is known about a phenomenon; the aim being to produce or construct an explanatory theory that uncovers a process inherent to the substantive area of inquiry (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). For this study, this method was selected due to the lack of research and knowledge regarding the impact of internet-mediated educational experiences on bilingual pre-service teachers. Next, we describe the state contexts, participants, data collection and analysis.

### **Study Setting**

The California study participants completed their undergraduate degree and were post baccalaureate students enrolled in a Multiple Subject credential program with a Bilingual Authorization. They attended a public state university in California and were undergoing preparation to become bilingual/dual-immersion teachers at the time of the interviews. During the three-semester credential program, candidates fulfill the required hours of student teaching in addition to their coursework.

Similarly, the Texas study participants were enrolled in a teacher preparation program seeking bilingual teacher certification at a public state university in Texas. Bilingual pre-service teachers in this program complete two years at a community college and one year of teacher preparation courses online. Additionally, bilingual pre-service teachers are required to complete one academic year of student teaching in a bilingual classroom while completing their online coursework.

### **Study Participants**

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at both institutions. The study sample included participants who were matriculated in a teacher education program with a focus on bilingual education/authorization and who self-identified as Latina. A total of eight English/Spanish bilingual pre-service teachers were recruited, four from one bilingual authorization credential program in California, and four from one teacher certification program in Texas. The California bilingual pre-service teachers were conducting their clinical hours in two 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and two 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classrooms. The Texas bilingual pre-service teachers were completing their student teaching in 1<sup>st</sup> grade bilingual/dual-language classrooms. All study participants were in placements with bilingual children. Please refer to Table 1 for additional demographic information.

**Table 1: Bilingual Pre-Service Teachers' Demographics**

Participant	Year in Program	Grade Level Placement	Course Modality	Clinical Placement	State
Lety	Senior	1 <sup>st</sup>	Online	Face to face	TX
Yesenia	Senior	1 <sup>st</sup>	Online	Face to face	TX
Patricia	Senior	1 <sup>st</sup>	Online	Face to face	TX
Jazmin	Senior	1 <sup>st</sup>	Online	Face to face	TX
Lily	Post-Baccalaureate	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Online	Face to face	CA
Julieta	Post-Baccalaureate	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Online	Face to face	CA
Olivia	Post-Baccalaureate	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Online	Face to face	CA

Maria	Post- Baccalaureate	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Online	Face to face	CA
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*Note: All participants also identified as first-generation college students.*

## **Data Collection**

California participants were recruited via a detailed email about the study objectives sent to the listserv of students enrolled in the credential and bilingual authorization program at one state university. Similar to the California participants, Texas participants were recruited via an email sent to bilingual pre-service teachers enrolled in the teacher preparation program. Both California and Texas participants were instructed to contact the researcher to express their interest and schedule an interview. Participants were provided with the interview questions and consent form ahead of time. Both the interview protocol and consent form were in English. The interview questions were open-ended and pre-service teachers were interviewed one-on-one by two members of the research team. Both researchers are bilingual in Spanish and English and conducted the interviews in the language that participants felt comfortable with. Some participants used both languages, while others responded in English. Some of the interview questions included, “Do you think your experience as a student has changed due to COVID-19?”, “Have you experienced trauma in the online setting?”, and “In your role as a pre-service teacher, do you think about challenges for your own students?” The interview sessions lasted approximately one hour, with each session conducted and recorded over Zoom and later transcribed.

## **Data Analysis**

The analyses included several steps. First, once the interviews were transcribed, they were emailed to the preservice teachers to check for accuracy. Then, the researchers immersed themselves in the data by reading the transcriptions numerous times and taking notes. Next, in the analysis of the transcripts, the researchers utilized techniques related to both grounded theory and narrative coding. Grounded theory calls for constant comparative analysis for coding and category development. The initial stage of analysis compared event to event in each code. Initial codes were then compared to other codes. Codes were then collapsed into categories. New data was then compared with data obtained earlier during the analysis phases. This iterative process involved both inductive and deductive reasoning in data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Narrative coding is “appropriate for exploring intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions to understand the human conditions through narrative” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 296). Utilizing a narrative coding approach, the researchers created a list of codes. In subsequent meetings, the researchers collaborated and wrote detailed descriptions for each code in a codebook. Then the researchers re-read the transcriptions in their entirety, and individually critically examined the narratives. Based on a thorough discussion and mutual agreement, the classifications were finalized. In reviewing the codes, categories, and themes generated via the data analysis stages, two distinct areas emerged related to online

education and the trauma it created for the participants in the study. They are presented in the following section.

### **Positionality Statement**

We identify as Latina scholars and educators. At the time of writing this manuscript, we held faculty ranks of assistant and associate professors. Our academic disciplines are Education and Psychology. Three of the four researchers are bilingual–fluent in Spanish. All of us share research interests and perform scholarly work on the experiences of Latinx students. Two of us were responsible for coordinating bilingual education teacher certification programs. All of us have experience teaching both undergraduate and graduate students. Three of us have also taught in the K-12 sector and understand first-hand the classroom experiences of the participants in the study. Our life experiences and positionality allowed us to connect with participants facilitating the recruiting, consenting, and interviewing processes. It further allowed a deeper understanding to interpret the findings when reading the transcriptions of the participant interviews.

## **FINDINGS**

First, we present how the Latina pre-service teachers in the study defined and described trauma to address the first research question. We then present internet-mediated events that the participants experienced in their role as students pursuing teaching credentials in their academic programs. Next, we present their experiences with vicarious trauma as educators where they witnessed and supported elementary-age students through their own traumatic experiences. Finally, we present their coping strategies to address the online trauma they endured.

### **Trauma Defined**

When asked about how they defined trauma, the participants shared similar understandings of the concept. They defined it as feelings of loneliness, hopelessness, fear, the potential for those feelings to resurface at any time that “you carry with you for the rest of your life” (Julieta). Each person articulated its effects on well-being, physical, emotional, and/or mental health. Patricia shared how trauma even made her question trust:

*Any trauma that you go through, whether it's personal or at school of any kind, it puts you away, it makes you get away from people because then you cannot trust anybody, sometimes you can't even trust yourself. It makes you get away from people and it's just depressing, sad, madness... all these words, that's how I would describe it. (Patricia)*

Three of the participants further described trauma as something you have no control over, as an event that happened to you. Almost all of the participants (7) further articulated that trauma was something that they can learn and grow from, and

that they can potentially reframe from a negative experience toward a positive outcome. Lily took it one step further and explained how she thinks about this concept regarding her own students.

*Trauma happens every day. When we are thinking about adult trauma, we are thinking about major things; abduction, being discriminated, right? But when I'm seeing trauma, it's the kids, their parents are getting divorced. That's traumatic for a child. Their pet dies, that's trauma. Their friends told them, "I don't want to talk to you no more, you're not my friend no more." I'm like how traumatic can that be for a 6, 7, 8 year old? ... [talking about how to address it] It's not just watching a video, it's not just talking about it. How do we help our students learn those skills? How to communicate better, how to be more empathetic, how to be kind? Because that's gonna help them overcome trauma.*  
(Lily)

The concept of looking out for others before looking out for oneself was found in all eight participant interviews and is expanded further below. The two important findings of this study highlight how online-mediated trauma impacts bilingual Latina pre-service teachers in both of their roles as students and educators.

### **Online Trauma as Students**

The bilingual Latina pre-service teachers shared multiple sources of trauma in their interviews. Some were more of a personal nature, others stemmed from experiences in an educational environment ranging from K-12 to postsecondary spaces, and some explicitly stated experiencing online trauma. Lety identified the frustration she felt that elevated to trauma status. Below is a snippet from the interview transcription. She had just been asked if she had experienced trauma in an online setting.

*Lety: Mmm... I would not consider... well maybe yes, maybe if in the way that one is getting very frustrated in trying to know everything and without help or it may be your professor, but it is not the same when they are not face-to-face with you. It is not like if you are in person because one quickly asks a question. Instead, online, you have to wait. And in the meantime, you're all frustrated or you're all stressed. So, I think that in a certain part that could also be part of traumas because at a certain point you don't even want to take online classes anymore because you're so overwhelmed and I would connect it with being a part of trauma.*

*Interviewer: So, you would say that the conditions that you have experienced trauma online, have been in courses?*

*Lety: Right. In online courses, you are unable to communicate quickly. Yes, I will consider that as part of the trauma.*

*Interviewer: And is this something that is still ongoing, or has there been a resolution to it?*

*Lety: I think it has been ongoing. I think that the way our program is, the way the program is set up, it's been super stressful; that if you ask me if I would like to continue with my masters, at this point, I would say no. I feel that the amount of homework...and while, yes, we do have our professors that are there for us, it goes back to the same thing. Everything is through appointment. Everything is through adjusting. And I think if it would be in person, it's like, you get a question right there when you're working with them, and you're like, 'Oh, okay, I'm asking right now.' So, I do think the online setting, at some point, can cause you trauma. Like, in my case, before being in the university and before doing everything online, it was like, 'Oh yes, I'm gonna go for my masters.' At this point, I'm just like, after I finish with my bachelor's, I'm done!*

The educational context leading to online trauma for Lety forced her to make a difficult decision and not continue pursuing a master's degree. This is important to note as the pandemic forced all instruction to shift modality online, and this sentiment may be experienced by many. Similarly, Julieta also had a traumatic event that made her consider leaving the teacher preparation program.

*[Talking about counseling services on campus.] I've tried to meet with a counselor. They're usually booked because last semester I tried. I had, I wanna say, it was an emotional breakdown. I couldn't handle the program anymore and I was going to actually withdraw from the program, and I did end up joining a support group that was to help with breathing techniques and meditation, things like that. If that was built into a residency teacher education program, it would help so much. (Julieta)*

The frustration of not being able to interact with peers or their students in person transcends their own mental health—it also affects the academic content and interpersonal skills that the teacher education programs are designed to instill. Hunter (2022) stresses the importance of attending to trauma in a higher education context reminding us to “engage in intentional strategies that might serve as buffers or protective factors for the unfortunate and adverse experiences people might have experienced” (p. 37).

The inability to engage in-person with their own students had an effect on the participant's performance as educators (as is evidenced in the next section). However, it also affected their own educational processes as students. Yesenia articulates the difference between conducting classroom observation over video, rather than in-person.

*When we did change over to online instruction, many of us didn't get those opportunities that everybody else had for their program before the pandemic. So, for example, us in the education program, we didn't get those full-on observations. We didn't get the in-person experience where we had to observe*



*classes in person. Before we started student teaching, we did all of our observations over videos of kids we had never met, and we weren't in the classroom. Although we did get instruction and we did observe, I feel as though being in person would have been a whole lot better especially because now that we are back in person, doing student teaching was basically like the first time ever being in a classroom and experiencing what all that was like, even though we were considered [to] already [have] done observations. (Yesenia)*

Here we see an example of how the change in modality had a direct effect on the learning of the participants. The decreased level of engagement with the students in the classroom placements limited the achievement of the intended learning outcomes of their academic program.

All of the participants experienced some form of trauma throughout their lives and educational journeys. What is humbling is hearing all that they have overcome, while still putting the needs of their own students ahead of their own. Next, we discuss the participant's role as educators which includes the important role of advocacy.

### **Online Trauma as Educators**

These pre-service teachers also endured vicarious online trauma via their student teaching. As part of the state requirements for attaining a credential, all bilingual pre-service teachers must complete a student teaching placement where they are hosted by a seasoned credentialed teacher who serves as their mentor and offers feedback and guidance on their teaching practice. As outlined in Table 1, all participants in this study were enrolled in face-to-face student teaching and worked with children in grades 1st through 3rd. The context of their early educational experiences of these young children are forever marked by the pandemic and the trauma it inflicted. For example, the 1st grade students these pre-service teachers worked with started their educational journeys online due to the mandated stay-at-home orders executed at the height of the pandemic.

The participants all shared that the children they worked with understood the gravity of the situation, were aware of the impact of the pandemic and knew that people were dying. The fear and confusion instilled in their young minds, coupled with the inability to engage in experiential learning (to strengthen social skills via play with peers and interaction with teachers) resulted in trauma that was evident in the virtual classrooms the participants facilitated. Prior to her current placement in a 2nd grade classroom, Lily worked with kindergarteners who were learning remotely and shares, "It's been traumatizing for every student...can you imagine doing your first year in school through Zoom? Poor kids! Some of their parents kept them in distance learning." Lily explained that the trauma caused by the pandemic on young children resulted in parents choosing to keep their children at home in a remote learning environment versus exposing them to face-to-face instruction. The internet-mediated trauma also spanned beyond issues associated with the pandemic. Online consumption of world news addressing the high death tolls worldwide, a war abroad, and violence in the U.S. also led study participants to experience secondary trauma as they witnessed how their students were affected by these and other world events.

### ***Dual Roles, Dual Modalities, Multiple Challenges***

Complicating participants' trauma, these pre-service teachers wore two hats. Their student hat required that they complete their coursework online, and their teacher hat required them to adjust from teaching children virtually to face-to-face as school districts returned to in-person instruction. Implementing their online learning of best teaching practices to both virtual and applied teaching posed a challenge for these pre-service teachers. Yesenia shares how learning about her 1st graders online consumption of such difficult topics required her and her mentor teacher to serve as trauma counselors.

*I'm currently in a 1st grade placement, and as little as they are, they comprehend a lot of things and they do have full on conversations...and they do know what's going on because they probably heard their parents talking about it. So, during morning meetings we allow them to talk about it, to express their thoughts and opinions in a safe space where no one is reprimanded. We all share opinions, and we all leave feeling respected for our thoughts and opinions. (Yesenia)*

All participants spoke about the strategies being used in their classroom to support and guide children with unpacking and processing their own thoughts and emotions about events they learned about online that were troubling them. Like Yesenia, other participants described how morning check-ins were facilitated to provide children with an opportunity to share at their comfort level. Lety described how in her 1st grade class "harmony circle" many of her students privately revealed their fear of contracting COVID-19 or having someone in their family falling ill.

*If they feel comfortable sharing, they share things with the class...The teacher also has a little box on the side where the students write something that they want her to know privately...it's so hard for them to say, "I need to go to the doctor." These are methods that she's using right now to track their emotions. As well as in the morning, they have little pictures at the door, and they touch however they feel; if they feel happy, if they feel sad. If some of them pick sad, then she usually asks them, "why are you feeling like that? Is there anything that I could do for you?" (Lety)*

As beneficial as these practices were to help children work through online-mediated trauma, this further triggered the online traumas of each of the participants. It impacted their own sense of wellness and increased stress and anxiety while being positioned in a space where they felt powerless. Olivia stated,

*There would be sometimes...I would turn off the camera and just cry because... they would tell me about situations that were going on at home and obviously being in a pandemic, it's not like I could tell them, "Hey you know at school we'll talk about it." They were living in that environment 24/7 [isolated distance*

*learning] and there's only so much we can do in regards to, you know, reporting it to the right people or letting our admin know. (Olivia)*

Olivia continued to share how teaching at a distance further exacerbated her inability to address the needs of her students.

*I've dealt with some wild stuff on campus but seeing this stuff online, it opened up my eyes to a fully different side of these students, and it was hard for them. I know a lot of them, at that age, were going through depression because it was so isolating, and it was hard. It was kind of like, just like I said, there's only so much I could do, that sometimes I felt helpless. (Olivia)*

Olivia's comments speak to the humanization that occurred due to the shared trauma caused by the pandemic and mediating sources like social media.

### **Advocacy**

Throughout the interviews, the participants demonstrated an ethic of care for the students in their classroom placements that rose to the level of advocacy. Just as Olivia shared above, Patricia underscored the importance of getting to know each child on a personal level in order to support their learning and engagement.

*I'm always aware of who's around me. I'm always reading their body language and how they look, if they look sad, I'm sad, you know. The way I try to approach it, if I'm not sure if something is going on, I build a relationship with the student...and a lot of the times, that's all I need to do for them to open up to me and talk to me...I think that I will always be aware of getting to know them more than just "oh, that's my student" and that's it, or just knowing their academic progress, but also know their, you know personal life to a point where I can support them and I know what they're going through, as it might be affecting their schooling. (Patricia)*

Study participants demonstrated a strong sense of advocacy for their students. Despite experiencing vicarious trauma from working with their students (perhaps even due to experiencing this secondary trauma), they are committed to helping them work through the social and educational challenges. Olivia shares,

*You see academically how behind they are because they were able to turn off the camera, turning off that learning as soon as it went off. So, I see how academically, a lot of these students are really, more than usual I would say, behind. It's hard to see because you can tell that some of the kids, they're trying their hardest but it's just, they're mentally still two years behind and it's heart-breaking because one wants to help the most that you can, but there's a point where you've done all you can and you just keep trying and hope for the best. (Olivia)*

Research by Miller and Flint-Stipp (2019) similarly found that the demands of classroom placements coupled with a sense of lack of support contributed to vicarious trauma due to the physical, emotional, and mental stress. This trauma underscored the importance of self-care.

### **Coping Strategies**

While study participants spoke about the myriad sources of online-mediated trauma they have experienced on their journeys to becoming bilingual teachers, they also spoke about the coping strategies they employed to maintain wellness. It was evident in their stories that personal relationships, national and global politics, news, racism, social media, and the day-to-day stressors of balancing family life and school responsibilities triggered recognition of the importance of attending to their wellbeing so they could be effective students and educators. Participants not only spoke about their personal coping strategies, but also shared their approaches for protecting their loved ones and their students.

The participants shared both the sources of trauma, and the coping strategies they enacted to protect themselves from further harm. They stressed the importance of building relationships to cope in virtual spaces. Some limited their exposure online to known triggering events, and some advocated the pursuit of professional help through therapy. Not only did they utilize coping strategies, but the participants also advised their elementary-age students to utilize them as well. This was a powerful act as it instilled in the students the importance of self-care and wellness early on.

## **DISCUSSION**

The primary purpose of this study was to understand the online traumatic experiences of bilingual Latina pre-service teachers as they navigate their journey toward becoming bilingual teachers, and how these experiences relate to the challenges that these women faced while being pre-service teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings present how study participants define trauma. The narrative inquiry analysis revealed two prominent perspectives of experiencing online-mediated trauma--as students and as educators. The education of both study participants and their students was disrupted by the pandemic, and both had to abruptly move to distance learning. The participants' own traumatic experiences with online education helped them be empathetic to the experiences of the young children they were teaching online and later face-to-face. The insights study participants gained from both roles as students and educators helped them develop an appreciation for the importance of humanizing emotions and getting to know their students on a personal level. These insights led them to recognize that teacher advocacy is important for the educational and overall wellbeing of schoolchildren. Another important revelation for study participants was the crucial need for self-care. At the core of their coping strategies, they practiced relationship building and becoming more aware of their wellness, making mental health a priority.

Finally, it is critical that educators at all grade levels are aware of the myriad ways that trauma shows up in the lives of their students, as demonstrated in this study.

As we are still working through the effects of the pandemic, we must also be sensitive to the additional traumas created and carried over into the online realm. While these are extremely important challenges to note, perhaps what is the most illuminating from this project is how these bilingual Latina pre-service teachers have worked through the challenges of online traumas as both students and educators and remain resilient advocating for our nation's future leaders.

## **Implications**

Amidst all of the death and destruction that the COVID-19 pandemic brought us, there are a few points of positivity and lessons learned. The most ground-breaking is the increased attention to mental health, well-being, and wellness. At no time prior has this concern been a topic of conversation in so many aspects of our lives: professionally, personally, socially, between and among families, and even toward complete strangers (Boden et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2022; Xiong et al., 2020). A collective state of stress, anxiety, and depression has brought us together (figuratively) while keeping us extremely isolated (physically). The hope is that moving forward, as we emerge post-pandemic, we remain vigilant about the trauma each of us carry and prioritize wellness. What does this look like for bilingual Latina pre-service teachers? A few recommendations for practice, policy, and research follow.

## ***Practice***

Higher education (via teacher preparation programs) must partner with local school districts (Pressley et al., 2021) where pre-service teachers complete their placements. Together, they need to support teacher candidates as they navigate challenges that have the potential to turn into trauma with long-term effects. One element of this partnership should address ways to handle historical, generational, discriminatory, and other types of trauma, including any future trauma that will occur online as this study highlighted. The curriculum should move beyond only teaching content and strategies to also prepare them for unanticipated needs that their future students may have (i.e. trauma, social-emotional needs, development, etc.). The vicarious or secondary trauma (Adams et al., 2001) that pre-service teachers experience has been documented to lead to burnout and other psychological effects (Miller & Flint-Stipp, 2019). Given this, it has been recommended that training on trauma and self-care are needed for pre-service teachers in both their coursework and in continuing education in order to address some of the traumatic experiences that were alluded to in the participant interviews (Miller & Flint-Stipp, 2019). Further, the stress that can come from teaching in an online environment, particularly during the pandemic, can take a toll on pre-service teachers' mental health and well-being. When considering the curriculum of pre-service teachers, infusing topics such as work-life balance, self-care, and mindfulness can be helpful in alleviating some of the stress experienced when working in an online space (Underdown, McCabe, & McCabe, 2022). It is imperative to address the trauma induced by day-to-day practices (Hunter, 2022).

## ***Policy***

Policy must catch up with the demonstrated best practices in the field. One way of doing this is to empower pre-service teachers by removing the red tape hindering them from being advocates for young learners (Ramírez & González, 2012). Carrillo (2010) shares his perspective as a teacher educator as he grapples with his own responsibilities after a colleague (a first-year Latina teacher) decides to leave the teaching profession. The teacher is burdened with feelings of isolation, low pay, long work weeks, and humiliation at the hands of peers and leadership at her school. Her desire to be a transformative educator for the children she served was thwarted by these challenges and led to her departure. Similar to Carrillo's (2010) work, Morales and Shroyer's (2016) research on bilingual Latina pre-service teachers in a teacher education program also found that a sense of personal agency inspired by personal hardships is what led pre-service teachers to seek the teaching profession. Like the pre-service teachers in this study, the participants of Morales and Shroyer's (2016) study also aspired to improve the educational experiences of diverse children through advocacy, specifically for bilingual Latinx children. As this study has demonstrated, the participants are doing what they can to advocate for the interests of their students. This added labor cannot lie solely on their backs. Mentor teachers and school administrators need to provide the requisite support at school so that Latina pre-service teachers can thrive. Leaders in the K-12 system need to recognize the need for a systemic change in how policies and practices targeted at bilingual children are rooted in deficit thinking (Valenzuela, 1999) and thus generate challenges that clash with the teaching philosophies of bilingual Latina pre-service teachers that are rooted in equity, social justice, and empowerment (Morales & Shroyer, 2016).

Moreover, particularly examining the challenges that the pandemic heightened, Darling-Hammond and Hyland (2020) underscore the importance of intentional investments from all levels of government when it comes to teacher education recruitment and retention. They argue that teacher education programs must prepare pre-service teachers with the skills that match the current realities of schools and school children. For example, the growing interest in distance, hybrid, and blended learning, and addressing the social emotional needs of children. Federal funding needs to be earmarked for added training to effectively attend to these realities. The federal funding of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act has been exhausted, but the needs it helped to address remain. To combat the negative economic impact many Americans experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. Congress passed this economic stimulus bill that provided a payment to eligible Americans. Another important policy recommendation is to prioritize the wellness of both students and educators and not make decisions solely based on expediency. In addition to emphasizing the needs of school children, Pressley et al. (2021) highlight the importance of schools and school districts to not only consider the wellbeing of the K-12 students, but to also be mindful of the wellbeing of the educators. Enacted policies should not make teachers feel as if they are putting their lives at risk when entering their classroom (Slavin & Storey, 2020).

## **Research**

Further research specifically focused on bilingual Latina pre-service teachers is needed. The pandemic demonstrated just how difficult the teaching profession is exacerbated by work-related stress and anxiety (Santamaría et al, 2021; Xiong et al., 2020) and how much it requires of educators when attending to the needs of their students. Research on teacher education programs—particularly the experience of bilingual Latinas in education (Katznelson & Bernstein, 2017)—is essential to retain teachers and address the teacher shortage (Kennedy, 2020; Ramos Harris & Sandoval-Gonzales, 2017; Torre Gibney, et al., 2021). Targeted research can provide further data to reimagine curricula and address the online traumas uncovered in this inquiry. Hunter (2022) presents five case studies to illustrate how trauma manifests in higher education and offers recommendations for engaging in trauma-informed practices with students. These examples (a student being consistently late, demonstrating combative behavior, feeling uncomfortable being called on, refusing to work on a group project with a peer, and feeling anxiety when there is a change to the syllabus) alongside the findings from this study provide a blueprint for considering the manifestations of trauma both in person and online and future research in this area.

## **CONCLUSION**

All of the bilingual Latina pre-service teachers in this study experienced some form of trauma throughout their lives and educational journeys. They described it as feelings of loneliness, hopelessness, fear, the unpredictability for those feelings to resurface at any time, and their potential lifetime permanence. Further, the recent emergence of online trauma exacerbated by the pandemic included isolation, lack of academic and social engagement, vicarious trauma, and feeling powerless. Each person articulated its effects on their physical, emotional, and/or mental wellbeing. Despite these challenges, the educators were able to continue in their teacher certification programs and selflessly attend to the traumas (both online and in-person) of their own students. By spotlighting the educational traumas experienced by our participants, we call on both K-12 and higher education systems to address these issues and not let the educational trajectories highlighted here to become the norm.

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