Understanding Voice, Identity, and Navigating Contested Spaces:
Dual Language Latina/o/x K–6 Teachers' Use of *Testimonios*

By

JENNIFER MCNEIL

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

Educational Leadership

in the

OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

DAVIS

Approved:

_____

Elizabeth Montaño, Chair

_____

Danny C. Martinez

_____

Margarita Jimenez-Silva

Committee in Charge

2022

ABSTRACT

Bilingual authorized Latina/o/x teachers in a Spanish–English dual language immersion program—themselves schooled in an era of English-only anti-immigrant hegemony and racism—face school systems today that perpetuate raciolinguistic oppression and harm. At Dolores Huerta Elementary, a two-way bilingual immersion program with a mixed enrollment of White and Latina/o/x students in a predominantly White district, teachers have begun to use *testimonios* as a way to share, listen to, and reflect on their own raciolinguistic experiences. Findings indicate that teachers feel more confident, brave, and accepting of intersectional identities, and that they have recast their oppressive experiences not as a failure of self but as a failure of systems. *Testimonios* have also impacted how these teachers interact with the entire learning community, developing a closeness and understanding with colleagues, families, and students that has improved relationships, increased critical consciousness of raciolinguistic oppressions and harms, and impacted the use of pedagogical practices that affirm students' and families' languages, cultures, and identities. Implications from this study point to districts and site leaders providing opportunities for safe, brave intersectional identity counterstorytelling as one method to improve well-being, counter racist and linguicist systems' harm, and bring a sense of community and cohesion between teachers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to first and foremost acknowledge the contributions of my advisor and dissertation chair, Dr. Elizabeth Montaño. From the first quarter in our Intro to Qualitative Methods I felt inspired, challenged, and welcome. She has a tremendous ability to hold the theoretical and practical, and to engage me (and our entire cohort) in meaningful, inquiry driven, relevant scholarship. Dr. Montaño believed in me sometimes before I did in myself, and with her encouragement, I feel capable and proud of this work. I would also like to thank the members of my committee: Dr. Danny C. Martinez and Dr. Margarita Jimenez-Silva. Your thoughtful feedback, careful reflection, and your suggestions and questions left me open, reflective, and feeling incredibly thankful for the opportunity to push my thinking.

Thank you to the UC Davis School of Education, in particular the CANDEL faculty and staff, who have provided a rich, complex, layered and intentionally sequenced graduate school experience that is wholly equity focused. I especially want to recognize Dr. Gee, Dr. Quijada, and Dr. Cuellar for your kindness, professionalism, skill, and expertise. I have benefitted tremendously from your support and development. Rosa, thank you for keeping us sane, on track, enrolled and managing so many layers.

Thank you to my CANDEL cohort 15! I am so honored and thankful to know you, your work, and to have been alongside you in this journey. I could not imagine another group who I would have wanted to share the joys and sorrows of these last three years.

The staff and colleagues in the Davis Joint Unified School District raised me as an educator. I owe so many there my appreciation for giving me a chance, for believing in my work and leadership, for making space and giving grace for my mistakes and learning. Thank you to Pam Mari, my mentor, without whom I most certainly would not be here writing this

acknowledgment. There are countless moments of gratitude I hold close: for her stories, her leadership by example, and her love. I want to thank all of the DJUSD family who went before me in CANDEL: Kim, Rody, and Mary to name a few. Your bravery let me dream. To Matt Best, who always centers students, and who eternally welcomes me back with open arms.

Thank you to my entire SEAL family, who have become so incredibly important to me. You saw me through two of these three years! Muchísimas gracias to my *testimonio* colegas Adriana, Corina, y Heather. You have listened to me and supported me through countless conversations, pushed my thinking around *testimonios*, bravely stood by and facilitated with me, and encouraged me to deliver my *testimonio* at my QE! Your words of encouragement mean so very much. Thank you to my SEAL DRA team, Charice and Corina (again!) … your support and friendship make me feel like we have been a team for much longer than we have. Patty, thank you for believing in me, for bringing me to SEAL, and for telling me to go write. It worked! To Anya for leading fiercely with a loving heart, for keeping us centered on our why, and reminding me to enjoy the brain "spa days."

I owe a deep gratitude to the DHE staff, families, and students. You welcomed me as your principal, gently and graciously coached my blind spots, grew my bilingualism, and allowed me to take risks. Together we took brave steps toward realizing a full bilingual program—on the backs of your spirit, your determination, and your drive for instructional equity and social justice. A deep thank-you especially to our SEAL coaches and specialists, Ana, Nora, Maddy, Heather, and Michelle, a fierce crew of women who always made me feel capable, balanced, and supported. The staff at DHE welcomed my children into the school with open arms. You have shared your language, race, culture, and heart with them, as well as your Cheerios and Tajín. Maestras Diaz, Lira, de La Torre, Castro, Muñoz, and now Arroyo and

Barrera, thank you for teaching Wes and Kerah. They are realizing bilingualism because of all of you. Maestras Torres, Santana, and Vanesa … you might as well have had them, they were in your rooms enough! I could not have "principaled" or parented without you three. And to the "maestra/os" accomplices, Ms. Fogliasso, Ms. Freshour, Ms. Schlageter and Mr. Ayon, thank you for welcoming my first born into your skilled, caring arms. To the powerful people in the office, my two Carmens, Annie, Laura, Daisy, thank you! And Mr. Malik, the heart and soul of the school, always helping, always smiling! To Ms. Uliasz and Consejera Mancilla, thank you for generously helping me pilot the research protocol, and for being trusted friends. I also want to thank the brave *testimonialistas* who first inspired me and opened the door of curiosity: Maestra Santana and Maestra Guerrero. Without your willingness to take that brave step, I would have never explored this topic.

I want to thank my husband, Josh, who unwaveringly encouraged me to keep going and made it possible to do so with hours of single parenting while I attended classes, wrote, and then wrote some more. And to my children, Robin, Wes, and Kerah, who cheered me on from day 1, leaving Post-it notes, drawing me congratulations pictures, and giving me a home- made coupon book to "cash in" whenever I needed help. I love you all more than words can describe. I am so proud of you. A tremendous shout-out and love to Kathy and John Mac, who celebrate and hold our family in our triumphs and our tragedies. To my parents, Charles and Kathy, I love you. Your sacrifice, hard work, and encouragement is the reason I believed I could.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the teachers at DHE who are the *adelita guerreras/os/xs*—who choose each day to bring their full selves to this work. I have grown as a leader and as an accomplice for racial and linguistic equity because of you.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii
DEDICATION vi
List of Tables x
List of Figures x
CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY 1
Introduction 1
Statement of the Problem 1
Purpose of the Study 3
Research Questions 4
Legislative Supports for Bilingual Education 5
Dual language Programs 5
Dolores Huerta Elementary 7
Testimonios as Pedagogical Practice 8
CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK 9
Introduction 9
Critical Race Theory 9
Community Cultural Wealth 12
Counterstorytelling via Testimonios 13
CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW 16
Introduction 16
Racial and Linguistic Identity 16
The TWBI Context 21
Testimonio as Transformative Centering of Counterstory 22
Testimonialista 22
Listeners 24
Social Justice and Equity 25
Conclusion 27
CHAPTER 4: METHODS 28
Research Design 28
Research Setting 28
Participants 31

Data Collection 32
Data Analysis 33
Criteria for Trustworthiness 35
Positionality 35
Limitations 37
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS 39
Summary of Key Findings 39
Themes Emerging in the Data 40
Theme 1: DHE “Culture of Being a Village” 40
Theme 2: Critically Conscious Counterstories: "A Personal Statement From the Heart." 50
Theme 3: *Testimonios* as Transformative Pedagogy 68
Theme 4: *Testimonios* Influence Interactions With the School Community: “You’re Able to Not Assume but Wonder” 75
Theme 5: Impacts on Pedagogy and Student Connection: “That’s What Makes It Beautiful.” 83
Summary of the Chapter 91
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS 93
Introduction 93
Summary of the Study 93
Research Questions 94
Discussion of Findings 94
RQ 1: How Does the Use of *Testimonios* as a Pedagogical Strategy Connect Bilingual Teachers to Their Own Racial, Social, and Linguistic Counternarrative? 95
RQ 2: How Does This Understanding of Identity and Voice Inform How They Interact With the School Community? 98
Implications for Policy and Practices 100
Implications on Latina/o/x Teacher Well-Being and Retention 101
Implications on the Climate and Culture of the School Community 102
Implications for Pedagogy and Associated Professional Learning 104
Recommendations for Policy and Practice 105
Conclusion 107
References 109
Appendix A: Interview Protocol Bilingual Authorization Teacher in K–6 TWBI 112
Appendix B: My *Testimonio* 114

List of Tables

Table 1. Participants 32

List of Figures

Figure 1. The Reinforcing Process of *Testimonios* 15

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Introduction

With the passage of Proposition 58 in November 2016, California voters and legislators made a decisive and historic move that has reconstituted the landscape of bilingual education and made access to linguistically centered, equity-driven programming law. This aggressive agenda calls for all California high school graduates to be biliterate and bilingual by 2030, with specific guidance for districts mandating that all children have access to high-quality, innovative, and research-based language programs that are responsive to the specific linguistic demographics of the families they serve. This is a dramatic sea change from the previous 20-year reign of policy authorized by Proposition 227, which effectively eliminated bilingual classrooms, mandated English-only instructional programs, and affected generations of dual language learners and emergent bilingual children. The raciolinguistic, political, social, and academic repercussions of that era are still deeply felt today and are intimately connected to one formidable problem that is preventing us from realizing the goals of Proposition 58: the bilingual teacher shortage.

Statement of the Problem

Quite simply, we do not have enough bilingual-authorized K–6 multiple-subject teachers to staff dual language programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2018). In addition to the bilingual-authorized credential supply issue, however, we need to carefully think about retention and the supports that are or are not in place to help bilingual teachers thrive and navigate racially and linguistically contested K–12 spaces (Kohli et al., 2017) and to overcome dominant deficit narratives about bilingualism solidified by Proposition 227. Although Darling-Hammond et al. (2018) considered the growth of dual language programs with the passage of Proposition 58, citing the challenge of keeping up with the new demand, they failed to consider how racism and

linguicism in K–12 and the remnants Proposition 227 left behind affect potential bilingual teacher candidates. This is more than a supply–demand issue; we are now reliant upon a population that was denied their language in their own education during their developmental years. This stripping of home language via restrictive linguistic legislation influences the choices, attitudes, and beliefs about the value, purpose, and strength of bilingual teachers' registries of languages other than English (Ek et al., 2013). There are teachers with bilingual credentials, including newly credentialed teachers, who are in English instruction programs. This oversight around the influence of raciolinguistic repercussions in the supply–demand argument of the current teacher shortage is one my study aims to resolve by looking at the converse—those places where bilingual teachers emerge and thrive despite our recent era of English-only hegemony.

Approaching the bilingual teacher shortage through a racial, linguistic, and cultural asset-based lens has the potential for positive impact on teacher recruitment and retention. It will be years before the current legislation and program growth can right the wrongs of English-only. Understanding the effects of this era on racial, cultural, and linguistic identity development for bilingual teachers is equally as important as understanding the effects on academic biliteracy development of teacher candidates. Because despite this tremendous teacher shortage problem, we are not completely without bilingual teachers, and we should look to these professionals to better understand the context of their success. There are pockets where bilingually certificated teachers thrive and persist.

Such is the case at Dolores Huerta Elementary (DHE), a two-way bilingual immersion (TWBI) school, located near Sacramento in northern California. Specifically, there is one practice turned pedagogy that has recently emerged at DHE that aims to center racial, linguistic,

and other intersectional identity injustices and may be one of many keys to understanding more about what calls and keeps teachers in the field: *testimonios.* In using *testimonios,* the teachers at DHE write and then share their stories of injustice and oppression along with counterstories of resistance, joy, liberation, and persistence, with each other and with students and families. I was their principal for many years and it is this insider, now turned researcher, who is positioned to explore the meaning teachers at DHE make via this practice, to elevate their counterstories, to share their journey of resistance and their celebration of bilingual and racial pride. If *testimonios* have the potential to recast linguicist and racist experiences as a failure of K–12 systems rather than personal failures, as researchers Blackmer Reyes and Curry Rodríguez (2012) suggested, then there are potential implications for use in K–12 and pre-service programs, especially programs that already have a systems-change equity framework. It could be that to do this deeply human work in dual language, bilingual teachers need an opportunity to tell their linguistic and racial stories and to be heard. And in the process of their telling, we might uncover how they navigate and engage with the complex, racially contested ground of K–12 dual language programs. The counterstories of these teachers, how they make meaning and understand their intersectional identities and voice, and how they navigate the complex racial and linguistic dynamics within the school, the district, and the community, are therefore worth exploring.

Purpose of the Study

The first purpose of this inquiry is to determine how the use of *testimonios* as a pedagogical strategy connects bilingual teachers at DHE to their own racial, social–cultural, and linguistic counternarrative. The second purpose is to learn about how this understanding of identity and voice informs how they interact with the school community. Our bilingual teachers of color have a *testimonio*—a counterstory of how they grew their bilingualism and biliteracy in

the face of hegemony, oppression, and harmful linguistic policies and practices in public schools. If we can learn how the practice and strategy of *testimonio* shapes teachers' understanding of their bilingual, racial, and cultural identities and voices, we can determine if the application of the strategy is worth replicating and in what contexts. In addition, we can delve further to see to what degree the transformation adds to the teachers' experience with navigating in and engaging with the learning community. The following research questions are aimed at exploring these concepts.

Research Questions

1. How does the use of *testimonios* as a pedagogical strategy connect bilingual teachers to their own racial, social, and linguistic counternarrative?
2. How does this understanding of identity and voice inform how they interact with the school community?

To provide context and depth of understanding for these research questions, I will unpack the developed conceptual framework and related theories, including critical race theory (CRT) and community cultural wealth (CCW), and how these theories relate to *testimonios* as a pedagogical practice. Prior research has informed the scope and direction of this proposed study, and as such, a review of relevant literature bucketed into three distinct areas of teacher racial and linguistic identity development, the context of TWBI, and *testimonios* as a transformational pedagogical practice for social justice and equity, follows the conceptual framework discussion. I will explore my positionality and several known limitations and mitigation strategies used. Next, I will outline the qualitative research methods I used to gather and analyze the data. Following the methods section, I will share the findings of the research and presenting themes. Finally, I

will conclude the dissertation with potential implications for the field of dual language, including teacher retention and professional development.

Context of Study

Legislative Supports for Bilingual Education

There are several convergent policies that shape the political climate and context for this study. In addition to Proposition 58, also known as California EDGE (Education, Diversity, for a Global Economy), the California English Learner Roadmap was unanimously approved in 2017 by the State Board of Education, and it calls for access to high-quality instructional programs that promote and affirm home language. This guidance for districts and educators outlines a new approach to the teaching of students classified as English learners that is asset based and needs responsive, with high intellectual quality of instruction and meaningful access to content and calls for the alignment of systems for maximum effectiveness. California legislators have identified a clear funding source that may be directed toward dual language programs via the Local Control Funding Formula supplemental funds for those K–12 districts and schools who serve high concentrations of emergent bilinguals (students classified as English learners). This combination of policy, funding, and instructional guidance sets a background of conducive conditions that make the effort to build and sustain effective dual language programs an urgent and realistic task.

Dual language Programs

Within this policy context, dual language programs are further positioned by way of their programmatic goals to affirm and lift intersectional identities. The question around how to do so, to build and affirm intersectional identities, counternarrative voices, and social justice, is critical for dual-immersion educators to consider not only for their own sense of well-being and efficacy,

but because sociocultural competence is one of the three foundational pillars of dual-immersion program design (Howard et al., 2018), in addition to biliteracy/bilingualism and content standards. Research as well points to the great promise of dual-immersion programs to combat structural racism and linguicism in K–12 education (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017; Thomas & Collier, 2012). Dual-immersion teachers, therefore, are challenged not only to develop biliteracy and mastery of grade-level content, but also to create the conditions that foster and affirm sociocultural competence and raise critical consciousness (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017). In addition, dual-immersion programs are often spaces where emergent bilingual Spanish-speaking students are meant to act as language experts and models for their Spanish-learner peers. This is a unique context that sets the stage well for a counterstory to be told, where Spanish or language(s) other than English can be centered, elevated, and affirmed. If we expect teachers to develop student voice, and to elevate and affirm historically marginalized emergent bilinguals and their home language, then we must attend to teachers' own bilingual, racial, and cultural identity development and counternarrative voice. In schools such as DHE where there is a more equal distribution of students classified as English learners to Spanish learners as compared to other sites in the district, bilingual Latina/o/x teachers may see more of themselves in their students. As stated earlier, many of these bilingual teachers were themselves schooled under English-only, and the harm of this era is part of their lived experiences. What does it mean to go themselves from being classified as an English learner in a climate of home-language oppression to becoming teachers of their home language? Until we have addressed our own harms, found and raised our own voices, we cannot raise up others.

Dolores Huerta Elementary

DHE is a dual language program in a predominately White middle- to upper-class college town, designed both to serve students classified as English learners and to appeal to White English-speaking families. Although a more thorough analysis of the setting is in the Site and Sample portion of the dissertation, a preliminary discussion here serves to help set the context related to the larger picture of dual language programs. Of the nine elementary schools in the district, DHE is the only school that is classified as Title I (meeting the federal requirements of 55% or more low income/free and reduced lunch enrollment) and has the majority of students in the district designated as English learners. Moreover, the school has had a challenging history navigating the pressures of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the pejorative focus on assessment, and deficit framing around academic achievement and students of color. In the height of program improvement during NCLB, many White middle- and upper-class families fled the school as the boundaries of enrollment opened. Who chose to remain was a group of very committed, politically active families who were drawn to the dual language-strand program's promise of bilingualism and cross-cultural competence. As the strand grew, so did the disparities and disproportionality in outcomes between it and the English-only-instructed classrooms, such that eventually the school realized a transition to a school-wide TWBI program. This transition meant a dramatic overhaul of teaching positions, displacing English-only-credentialed teachers and hiring teachers with a bilingual authorization. In the last 5 years during my tenure the school successfully recruited and hired 13 bilingual-credentialed teacher positions and retained 5 bilingual teachers. In its current configuration and via the transformation, the school has garnered respect and has repositioned itself in the district and community as highly desirable both in terms of academic outcomes and commitment to equity. Where families once fled, they

queue up on kindergarten enrollment wait lists. These bilingual teachers have contributed immensely to the school's success, so much so that it was highlighted as an illustrative example of the English Learner Roadmap's promising practices for English learners by the California Department of Education (CDE) in 2018 (CDE, Multilingual Support Division, 2018). At DHE, there is an opportunity to take an asset-based lens to learn from the *maestra/o/xs*, as they tell their stories, their *testimonios*.

Testimonios as Pedagogical Practice

I operationalize the term *testimonio* as a pedagogical practice in this study, as a tool purposefully employed by bilingual teachers delivered to either colleagues, students, or families. *Testimonios*—eyewitness accounts of injustice/oppression aimed at social justice—have long had a profound transformational impact on teller and listener in higher education (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; El Ashmawi et al., 2018), including teacher credential programs (Sosa-Provencio et al., 2019), and have begun to appear as a pedagogical practice in K–12 (Cuevas, 2016; Passos DeNicolo et al., 2015). Although more has been studied about their impact in higher education, there is a lack of clarity worth exploring around the purpose and potential impact of the practice for bilingual K–12 teachers, particularly if the practice aids in an affirming engagement with the learning community. Although not the focus of this study, it is worth noting the use of *testimonios* as a counter-methodological practice as well; one that in early research was used in part to decenter western methods that privileged objectivity (Pérez Huber, 2009).

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

To understand the confounding forces and contested space bilingual teachers of color must navigate and how the pedagogical practice of *testimonios* serves to make meaning and understanding around teachers' voice and intersectional identities, I employ a Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and a Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005) lens for the conceptual framework of this study. CRT lends the theoretical reasoning to explain how race and racism present in K–12 education, including the impacts of unmitigated oppression and aggressions toward teachers of color (Kohli et al., 2017). In CCW, researcher Tara Yosso (2005) gave a framework to understand how and what kinds of capital and resources communities of color possess and leverage that are undervalued or excluded as wealths from the educational system. It is my argument that *testimonios* as a pedagogical practice are an important third piece of the conceptual framework, as they are a vehicle by which teachers name racist and linguicist experiences, validate their cultural wealths, and elevate and make meaning of their voices and intersectional identities to engage with the learning community. To understand how these concepts interact to create the framework for this proposed study, I will first explore CRT and CCW and conclude by looking at *testimonios* as a path for counterstorytelling.

Critical Race Theory

CRT is the overarching lens to understand and view the context of the field for this study. CRT scholars argue that public school systems perpetuate and emulate racist societal structures (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The English-only era is just one of a plethora of examples of how policy and practices can be oppressive, racist, and linguicist within K–12 public education and supports the CRT argument. Teachers of color are often forced to leave part or many parts of

their identities at the building door in order to navigate the racist system (Kohli & Pizarro, 2020). CRT researchers have investigated what happens when teachers' racial and linguistic identities are devalued, ignored, and oppressed in the system (Kohli & Pizarro, 2020) and how racial and linguistic microaggressions persistently erode confidence and lead to mental and physical health challenges (Yosso et al., 2009). Furthermore, according to CRT, if we want more equitable public-school systems, we have to engage in an anti-racist lens at all system and structure levels, from laws and policies, to leadership, to instructional programs and practices (Kohli et al., 2017).

There were five main tenets of CRT identified by researcher Daniel Solórzano (1997), and I will discuss a few that are especially relevant for this proposed study. First is the *intercentricity of race and racism*, meaning that race and racism are "endemic and permanent in U.S. society" (Yosso, 2006, p. 7), including in the TWBI context in which these bilingual Latina/o/x teachers work. There is no "racism-free" space in education, and dual language immersion is not a panacea in which teachers of color can operate. Second, in the *challenge to dominant ideology* praxis there is a need to question approaches to schooling that imply race neutrality because there is an implicit bias for White, English-speaking, monolingual students (Solórzano, 1997). Again, this interplay exists in dual language immersion as well, with White students being praised and encouraged for speaking Spanish more than bilingual and first-language Spanish-speaking students, who are typically students of color (Palmer, 2007). Finally, the third tenet, the *commitment to social justice*, sees "schools as political places and teaching as a political act" with "education as a tool to eliminate all forms of subordination and empower oppressed groups—to transform society" (Yosso, 2006, p. 7). The conceptual framework I employ recognizes the potential bilingual Latina/o/x teachers have to transform spaces by

centering the counterstory through *testimonios* and views this work as an act of educational social justice.

Because this study focuses on Latina/o/x bilingual teachers, it is also worthwhile to discuss how the branch of Latina/o/x CRT (LatCrit) applies. As Yosso (2006) described, LatCrit brought a more layered racial understanding and consciousness by examining how specific experiences live within the Latina/o/x experience of oppression, discrimination, and marginalization. LatCrit specifically brings "a consciousness to CRT in examining racialized layers of subordination based on immigrant status, sexuality, culture, language, phenotype, accent and surname" (Yosso, 2006, p. 6). This is incredibly relevant to the conceptual framework for this study in the dual language immersion context, where bilingual Latina/o/x teachers must bring their language, race, and culture to work with them daily to engage in the practice of instruction in dual language. Their specific layered experiences of oppression and linguicism as Latina/o/x teachers, the messages as they grew in K–12 themselves of whose/which language has value, power, and prestige, and present-day linguicism and oppression around how "academic" or sufficient for the level of *maestra/o/x* their own language is, is a nuanced and layered racially conscious view of their experiences (Flores & Rosa, 2015).

Dual language immersion has the potential to deliver more equitable access and outcomes for students classified as English learners (Thomas & Collier, 2012; Palmer, 2007), and it is therefore a worthy anti-racist and anti-linguicist endeavor that aligns with system change in CRT. Although this is not a study on equitable student access and outcomes, to create and sustain dual language immersion programs, we need highly qualified bilingual teachers who choose and persist in the field and who can create the conditions required for equity. It is logical, therefore, that we focus on the health and well-being of our bilingual teachers as central to system efficacy,

equity, and justice and yet that we do so understanding the larger context of endemic racism in education.

Community Cultural Wealth

Understanding the scope, depth, and context of the problem of racism in education is critical. Yet I also find value in understanding where to find hope, health, assets, and strengths. Where are the places where teachers of color can bring their whole racial and linguistic selves to the table? To maintain a strength-based asset view of teachers of color, I am also using the framework of Tara Yosso's (2005) CCW, in which she outlined six cultural wealths that are unique to communities of color and that are often overlooked or undervalued in schools. Especially specific to the dual language immersion context are her notions of linguistic wealth and resistance capital. *Linguistic wealth* refers to the multiple repertoires of oral and written languages that communities of color bring to classrooms. *Resistance capital* refers to the practices, strategies, and tools people of color develop and employ to navigate and counter racist structures. Yosso (2005) looked for these wealths and encouraged us to recognize and validate them within our content and practices in schools. Essentially, she argued that our pedagogical choices matter not only for representation but to sustain culture. My conceptual framework proposes that in the context of TWBI, bilingual Latina/o/x teachers especially can bring their whole selves, including their linguistic and resistance wealths, to the classroom. In addition, school systems and leaders must become more skilled in identifying, amplifying, and valuing the CCW that bilingual teachers bring to the classroom and the school so that teachers are affirmed not only in their roles but in their identities, their whole selves (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). Because the very structure and premise of TWBI is a 50–50 enrollment of primary-language-Spanish to primary-language-English students, teachers have a unique opportunity to use

linguistic and resistance capital to amplify linguistic and racial counterstories of Latina/o/x families/students, to name oppression and harm, and to call on allyship with White families/students, which is further beneficial to the system.

Counterstorytelling via Testimonios

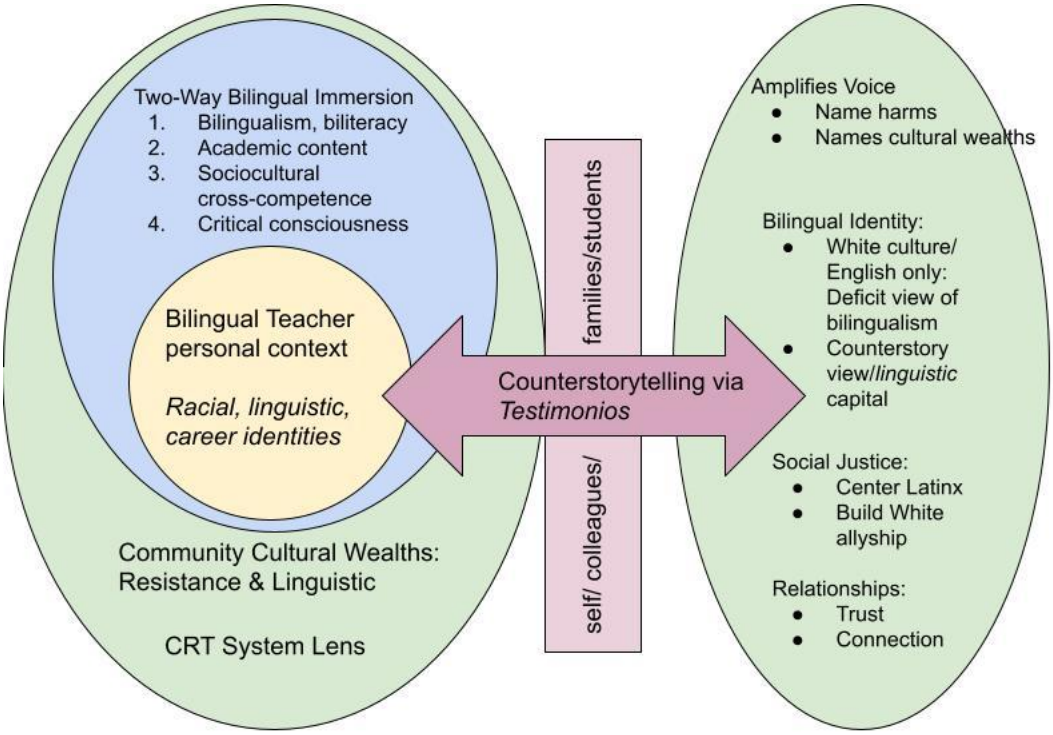
The concept within CRT and CCW of counterstorytelling has an important place in this conceptual framework, and it operates as one of the components of *testimonios* that is critical for transformation of spaces toward a centering of the nonmajoritarian story. First I will outline the ideas of majoritarian stories and counterstorytelling, and then I will apply these ideas to the pedagogical practice of *testimonios.* Majoritarian stories in education around Latina/o/x people usually have meritocracy threads and deficit views (Yosso, 2006). Counterstorytelling in education is an opportunity to combat the dominant deficit view narrative of people of color, and is therefore a method of centering marginalized voices. As Yosso (2006) described, counterstories do not just document racism, they bring a deep consciousness of the experience of racism by those who have experienced the effects against their person and/or against their community as a collective. Counterstories remind us that racism still exists, and equally importantly, even in the act of telling—not just in the content of the story—they remind us that there is resistance, hope, strength, and perseverance. *Testimonios* are a form of counterstorytelling.

Testimonios have been described as witness accounts, a storytelling of identities and experiences, of resistance to named harms, that can be either oral or in writing (Blackmer Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012). As a practice rooted in Latin American history, *testimonios* are poignantly employed in dual language immersion. They can be both a methodology and a pedagogical practice. In this case, I am looking at *testimonios* as a pedagogical practice by which

teachers deepen their understanding of their intersectional identities, elevate their bilingual voice in the counterlinguicism story, enact social justice, and build relationships with the school community. As researchers Blackmer Reyes and Curry Rodríguez (2012) described, *testimonios* are a pedagogical aid to develop a frame for structural marginalization and racism and they "can be used to recast and challenge pervasive theories, policies and explanations about educational failure as a problem not of individuals, but of systemic institutionalized practices of oppression" (p. 527). In addition, many researchers (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Sosa-Provencio et al., 2019) have posited the transformational nature of *testimonios* on both the teller and listeners.

There is a reinforcing process (Figure 1) that occurs with the use of *testimonios*, where the act of engaging in the practice itself both accesses and deepens teacher well-being by validating intersectional identities. There is an awakening of sorts that happens for the storyteller (and listener) in the act of narrating (Blackmer Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012) that is transformational. In other words, *testimonios* are a tool to access and deepen an affirmed sense of racial and linguistic identity, linguistic and resistance capital, and social justice. This happens when we name harms alongside resistance, when we name English-only hegemony alongside bilingual counterstories, and when we center the Latina/o/x voice alongside witnesses to that centering.

Figure 1. *The Reinforcing Process of* Testimonios



Note. The mutually reinforcing process with *testimonios* as the pedagogical practice is shown here. The practice of *testimonio* is transformative, both for the individual giving/sharing and for those who witness or listen. As the *testimonio* flows from teacher through witness(es) it changes and opens the witness, and it changes and opens the teacher. Voice is amplified by naming and listening to harms and resistance. Social justice is enacted by centering the Latina/o/x experience and building White allyship. Intersectional identities (language, race, culture, occupation) are validated. CRT = critical race theory.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review for this study can be best described in three categories: the first is teacher racial and linguistic identity development; the second is around the specific context of TWBI as equity battleground; and the third is understanding *testimonios* as a pedagogical practice in education and as a transformational social justice and equity strategy. These three areas of literature, connected to the conceptual framework, create an overall context to understand what might be happening for bilingual Latina/o/x teachers who engage in *testimonios* as a pedagogical practice.

Racial and Linguistic Identity

CRT researchers have investigated what happens when teachers' racial and linguistic identities are dismissed and oppressed in the system (Kohli & Pizarro, 2020): not only do they experience high levels of anxiety and depression and low efficacy, they are more likely to leave the field than their White counterparts (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). The context of the hostile and stressful environment in which teachers of color often find themselves, beyond higher rates of leaving the profession, includes being passed up for leadership roles or being viewed as less competent (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). Dual language programs already experience a bilingual teacher shortage, and this could further exacerbate the existing slimness of candidate pool and considerably jeopardize the viability and sustainability of even long-standing programs. Encountering a linguistically and racially antagonistic climate in dual language education could perhaps be even more damaging because of the hope and promise teachers find in working in

programs that have a more racially diverse staff and are held up by the field as being places primed for "critical consciousness" (Palmer et al., 2019).

Special attention to the linguistic climate in bilingual education is an important piece of understanding the oppressions and hostilities bilingual teachers face and how these shape their bilingual identities. Authors Winstead and Wang (2017) used an identity lens to describe the conditions specific to bilingual bicultural Latina/o/x teachers who must negotiate self-meaning within racist and linguicist society and social institutions that perpetuate language loss, shame, and discrimination. The way these systems and institutions view their language and culture with a deficit lens, in turn, affects the way they view themselves. These microaggressions can be found in staff interactions, family-teacher, and with administration, such as discussions around a teacher's ability to engage in "academic" registries of language—often those discussions are related to hiring and class assignment.

Many researchers have studied how bilingual Spanish-speaking teacher candidate language ideologies, which have been shaped by the English-only sociopolitical era and by schooling in this context of English hegemony, affect their beliefs and perceptions about the purpose and value of their registry of language, inclusive of how these ideologies influence decisions to pursue a bilingual career (Briceño et al., 2018; Ek et al., 2013; Flores & Rosa, 2015). It is important to note that hostile and oppressive linguistic experiences occur beyond the school walls, as the educational system is, after all, positioned within the larger racist and linguicist culture in the United States. The marginalized status of Spanish and the anti-immigrant and anti-Latina/o/x rhetoric and policies in the U.S. also shape and influence teacher candidate linguistic ideologies (Ek et al., 2013). A review of this literature is helpful to understand the effects of this era on bilingual identities. These teacher candidates—many of whom were not

even aware that bilingual authorization was an option—did not see themselves, and their registers of Spanish, as valid or sufficient to pursue a bilingual credential and "were concerned about their level of proficiency in academic Spanish after being told by schools, in various ways, to leave their Spanish at home" (Briceño et al., 2018, p. 217). Even though they saw bilingual programs as an opportunity to engage educational equity, they questioned their potential to be successful. The effects of the English-only era on bilingual teacher candidates is such that many are more comfortable with their "academic" English than Spanish. Implications from this research include recommendations for bilingual preparation programs to adopt policies and practices that validate home language and culture and that allow teachers to examine the relationship between language, race, and ethnicity.

Researchers have also studied how pre-service programs can intervene, support, and usher candidates toward a positive and affirmed bilingual identity—one that acknowledges harms and oppressions encountered and provides avenues to reclaim or reconnect to bilingualism (Nuñez et al., 2021). In order to serve racially and linguistically diverse students, teacher candidates need opportunities to recognize and realize the marginalization they experienced in their own K–12 schooling (Nuñez et al., 2021). Nuñez et al. (2021) concluded that strong teacher bilingual identities need to be prioritized in teacher preparation, with thoughtful and conscious work about who they are, and how their experiences have shaped their identities. Briceño and Rodriguez-Mojica (2019) expanded on this idea by arguing that the task of pre-service programs is to develop critical consciousness in pre-service teachers, and they proposed that their findings warrant an exploration of how critical consciousness can be a pedagogical tool in teacher preparation. Here the researchers recognized how deficit language ideologies are internalized (Briceño et al., 2018) and that these implicit perceptions of the inferiority and lower value and

worth of different registries of language are related to sociopolitical power dynamics. It is worth noting here that even in dual language immersion programs, these dynamics are in play (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017), and, as will be discussed, researchers have proposed a fourth pillar for dual language immersion that incorporates critical consciousness. It is understandable that if the research suggests that dual language programs should engage with a fourth pillar for students of critical consciousness, then teacher preparation programs should do the same (Briceño & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2019). The question remains: How do we incorporate acts of critical consciousness and positive identity development for teachers who are already in the field? *Testimonios* could play a role as a pedagogical tool to do this important work.

As discussed, it is through a lens of racial and linguistic identity development as framed by deficit views of people of color and English hegemony that we can best conceptualize the context within which bilingual Latina/o/x teachers engage in their work. There remains, however, another important lens in the racial and linguistic landscape: Where and how are teachers persisting despite this context, and what assets are they utilizing to navigate the field? Yosso's (2005) CCW model, particularly linguistic wealth, could be employed here to rewrite this narrative of a deficit lens for the bilingual teachers in this proposed study. Yosso (2006) dived deeply into the idea of counterstories to affirm bilingualism and to bring an asset-based lens of bilingualism into the educational system. Counterstories of uncovered linguistic wealth and resistance, shared via *testimonios*, are one possible way to counter deficit mindset and discourse and transfer toward an asset-based, additive approach. Burciaga and Kohli (2018) shared additional ways that racial justice-oriented teachers of color combat racism and work to transform our schools by using a CCW lens to review their pedagogical and other practices. They argued that these contributions go unnoticed in our White–Eurocentric system and that we would

greatly benefit from incorporating these pedagogical practices in order to better serve students of color. To bring these contributions to the forefront, Burciaga and Kohli employed a CCW lens for teachers. As they wrote,

> If we are committed to the recruitment and retention of teachers who come from underrepresented communities, it is not enough to hire teachers of color to merely occupy classrooms and translate documents—we must be more adept in identifying and valuing the CCW of knowledges and insights they bring with them to the classrooms and school communities that they work in. (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018, p. 7)

They found that teachers shared racial, class, linguistic and other educational experiences with families and students of color, which informed and strengthened their ability to form relationships and engage pedagogically. In this study, *testimonios* were also a way to get at the "identifying and valuing" of knowledge and wealths that bilingual Latina/o/x teachers bring to dual immersion. The responses of families of color to listening to the *testimonios* also reinforce this idea, as is explained in the findings.

Researchers Rodela and Rodriguez-Mojica (2020) applied a CCW lens to study how Latina/o/x school administrators approach and navigate their leadership position through various educational equity initiatives. Of particular interest to this proposal is that this research was conducted in a predominantly White region of the U.S. (Pacific Northwest), in an area where the Latina/o/x population is growing. DHE is also situated in a predominantly White district. Using a counterstorytelling methodology, Rodela and Rodriguez-Mojica analyzed the administrators' descriptions of the intricate and complex ways their childhood histories and schooling experiences as bilingual people of color influenced their current equity stance. The researchers characterized the findings as evidence of childhoods replete with strength and resiliency, personal sacrifices for aspirations, and deeper visions for equity in schools. Although they found connections from some of the participants to all six wealths when applying a CCW lens, *all* of the research participants used aspirational, linguistic, and navigational capital. This work raises

questions and has implications in particular for how we support Latina/o/x leaders for equity and social justice in predominantly White districts. In this way, the larger district and community setting of DHE will also play an important role in examining the issue of affirming and supporting bilingual Latina/o/x teachers.

The TWBI Context

The literature around racial climates for teachers is best understood in relation to the specific context of the TWBI program model in terms of both its promise and pitfalls of achieving racial and linguistic equity in access and student achievement. Cervantes-Soon et al. (2017) uniquely set the stage for understanding how important and pivotal the context of a bilingual educational setting is in combating inequities. The authors suggested that despite great promise found in earlier research into TWBI as a methodological and pedagogical approach that centers and affirms emergent bilinguals, in actuality TWBI programs must continually evaluate their systems and structures in order to retain a social justice and equity lens. To this end, they suggested a fourth foundational pillar to add to the TWBI framework, critical consciousness, and they suggested that the adults in the TWBI system must evaluate and engage in understanding their own positionality—the ways they are themselves marginalized/oppressed and the ways in which they hold power—in order to engage children in the work. Critical consciousness in the fourth pillar is defined as examining one's position and identities in relationship to power and privilege (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017). With critical consciousness, TWBI programs can move beyond affirming and understanding cross-cultural competence to actively engaging in social justice (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017; Palmer et al., 2019). The proposal of a fourth pillar is particularly exciting and important when thinking of the role *testimonios* might play. *Testimonios* could be a way for teachers to deeply connect with their positionality, including oppression and

cultural wealths. Through *testimonio* teachers might experience critical consciousness and see more clearly the benefit of providing similar opportunities for such reflection for students.

Of additional interest to context is whether the TWBI program is a whole school or school-within-a-school strand. Palmer (2007) found evidence on how strand dual-immersion programs can affect discourse and minoritize Latino students—meaning that within the dual language classroom students are affirmed, but when they leave the sanctity of the classroom and traverse literally or figuratively into the English-only school, they experience discrimination and oppression. Bilingual teachers, too, might be experiencing minoritization and discrimination within strand settings, and the use of *testimonio* delivered in a professional development setting with English-only teachers as witnesses might prove transformative or be a counter to this oppression. It is therefore with both of these contexts explored in the literature that I can explore how *testimonios* might be an avenue for making true on the promises of critical consciousness and improving the racial climate for teachers of color.

Testimonio as Transformative Centering of Counterstory

Much of the scholarship around *testimonios* as a pedagogical practice in either K–12 or pre-service teacher preparation programs points toward the transformational process for the teller, the listener, and the educational system by centralizing the counterstory and naming oppression and injustices. I will examine each angle in detail, making connections and looking for shortcomings in the existing literature.

Testimonialista

First and foremost, the act of storytelling is transformational for the teller. Both Sosa-Provencio et al. (2019) and El Ashmawi et al. (2018) argued that the act of engaging in *testimonios* is more than just a pedagogical practice, it is a transformative and healing

experience. They also leaned heavily on Yosso's (2005) theory of CCW as a theoretical framework. Both described it as imperative to support pre-service teachers in understanding their own intersectional identities, to name harms they experience(d) as students and teachers of color. They argued that *testimonios* are a way to elevate social consciousness and to bring about change for equity. Although studying how racial affinity groups can support in-service teachers of color as they critically examine oppression and harm, researcher Farima Pour-Khorshid (2018) noted that critical to this work was the practice of *testimonios*, which allowed for deep levels of sharing and contributed to the healing space within the affinity group. The studies cited here both named a healing process via *testimonios*. However, they centered either around pre-service bilingual Latina/o/x teachers or current teachers of color (not specifically bilingual Latina/o/x). Although understanding the practice in relationship to teacher preparation, and the experience of teachers of color generally, is important, my study aims to understand *testimonios* from the perspective of bilingual Latina/o/x teachers who are in the field. These bilingual Latina/o/x teachers are currently navigating the specific TWBI educational space, interacting with the school community. The question for me is one of retention of bilingual Latina/o/x teachers, including new and veteran teachers, not just one of preparation. I am curious about supporting bilingual teachers who are in the act of doing the actual work, who are confronted by the realities and weight of the daily grind of teaching.

Researchers themselves have also experienced the transformational process of *testimonios* in their act of conducting research on *testimonios* as a pedagogical practice. Researchers Sosa-Provencio et al. (2019) set out to look at testimonios as K–12 pedagogical practice, and found, in addition, that they had created a space for themselves to be transformed, to heal. In the process of writing and sharing their own *testimonios* and reading others, they

"(re)envisioned our own capacity … ascended to new heights and healed ourselves as whole women and teachers by reaching into our own histories *before* the oppression …" (Sosa-Provencio et al., 2019, p. 216). Sosa-Provencio et al. concluded that the work of *testimonios* has particular implications for teachers of color in terms of support, retention, and recruitment.

Listeners

Research also suggests that *testimonios* have transformational impacts on listeners. Delgado Bernal et al. reminded us that "no matter what form a *testimonio* takes, listening is central to the pedagogical practice of *testimonio*" (2012, p. 368). Listeners may be from similar racial and linguistic backgrounds as tellers, or not. El Ashmawi et al. (2018) described the communal and reciprocal process of *testimonios* and specifically called out the transformation of listeners and building allyship. The act of listening to stories of oppression and injustice, of hearing perspectives potentially different from their own, can bring about personal growth and reflection (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012) on the part of the listener. As well, Delgado Bernal et al. wrote, "listening to, sharing, and transcending struggles, pain, hopes, and dreams yields a type of interdependent solidarity, or *in lak'ech*—a Mayan philosophy that can be translated as '*Tu eres mi otro yo*' or 'You are my other me'" (2012, p. 368). In earlier work Delgado Bernal (2002) expanded on this idea of the importance of listening to

> serve as a pedagogical tool that allows one to better understand and appreciate the unique experiences and responses of students of color through a deliberate, conscious, and open type of listening. In other words, an important component of using counterstories includes not only telling nonmajoritarian stories but also learning how to listen and hear the messages in counterstories. (p. 116)

Sosa-Provencio et al. (2019) conducted their research analysis in a setting that is predominantly student teachers of color (with Latina/o/x the majority) and their study was on their transformation—as the title suggests, "Reclaiming *ourselves*" (emphasis added)—as a group of

Latina/o/x women. Therefore, the reciprocal and communal nature they described is within a group of people of color and supports the idea that for K–6 teachers, the practice of *testimonios* in a professional learning setting or with each other could also be transformational, reciprocal, and communal. In the context of my study, there may be differences in what or how teachers share depending on whether the listeners are colleagues or families/students, being mindful that dual language immersion at DHE is a two-way model.

Social Justice and Equity

Finally, it is worth noting that researchers have found the strategy of *testimonios* to be transformational in the educational context in terms of combating the deculturalization (Cuevas, 2016) and the Eurocentric epistemological deficit lens of racially and linguistically diverse student populations (Delgado Bernal, 2002), particularly Latina/o/x Spanish speakers. In some cases, the transformational space created allowed students to navigate complex linguistic and racial identities (Passos DeNicolo et al., 2015). This context transformation has to do with the analysis of the practice by the participants themselves, the researchers, and, I would argue, the readers of such research.

Passos DeNicolo et al. (2015) pulled from three interrelated theoretical frameworks in their research—CRT, LatCrit, and CCW—as they studied the use of *testimonios* in a third-grade classroom as an opportunity to reexamine and reevaluate the strength, narrative, and voice of Latina/o/x children. The authors found evidence of aspirational, linguistic, and navigational capital, and within those resistance and familial capital tenets. Of greatest importance, in my opinion, is the finding that these wealths were not visible to the teacher prior in the school year. It was through the use of *testimonios* that they were spoken, welcomed into the classroom, and celebrated. This is a radical recentering of the counterstory, where even a struggling reader

transformed perspective in the process of giving a *testimonio*. This study highlights the potential of bilingual classrooms with effective strategies to purposefully link students to their bilingual and bicultural identity and the wealth they bring. What these authors did not study, and what I aim to study, is the effect of engaging in the *testimonio* as a pedagogical practice on third-grade teachers themselves. What tools do they leverage in order to facilitate this pedagogy? Because without teachers facilitating and leveraging the strategy—and themselves experiencing its transformational nature—I struggle to understand how they can effectively levy the practice for students.

Where Passos DeNicolo et al. focused on the particular effects of *testimonios* in one classroom, researchers Delgado Bernal et al. (2012) took up the task of looking big-picture at the methodological, pedagogical, and political impacts and growth of *testimonio* in the field of education, particularly as a social justice practice for communities of color as a tool to disrupt oppression. As methodology, the authors showed how testimonios have been used in academia by Latina/o/x academics as a way to transgress and bring to the front inequities and systemic oppression within education. As a pedagogical practice, they argued that *testimonio* "lends itself to a form of teaching and learning that brings the mind, body, spirit, and political urgency to the fore" (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 368). This connection between the mind, body, spirit, and *political* urgency makes the pedagogical practice transformative in nature in terms of social justice. This perspective of *testimonios* as a tool to disrupt oppression and as an opportunity to transform and to connect the mind, body, and spirit to the political work holds great promise for bilingual teachers in dual language programs, who navigate contested racial and linguistic educational spaces in a context where educational equity and social justice are part of the program goals and design.

Conclusion

In summary, the literature sets a stage to understand the racial and linguistic climate and space bilingual teachers of color face each day as they traverse to work and back, and how this climate affects their health, well-being. and persistence in the field. Moreover, the literature points out the unique context of dual language programs and their promise and potential shortcomings as equity-centered, socially conscious educational spaces. It calls for approaches, practices, and strategies that can help affirm racial and linguistic identities. Finally, the literature reviewed here paints a picture of how *testimonios* might be such a practice to affirm identities and transform spaces by centering the counterstory, and it highlights the lack of looking at this from the perspective of in-service teachers in dual language programs. It is within this understanding of the literature that I created the following research design and methods to answer how bilingual Latina/o/x teachers make meaning and sense of their intersectional identities in dual language—and see their work as potentially political and equity driven—via *testimonios* as a pedagogical practice.

CHAPTER 4: METHODS

Research Design

I engaged in a qualitative research study because the goal was to understand the experience and meaning teachers have constructed around their voice and intersectional identities from engaging in the pedagogical practice of *testimonios*. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) wrote, "Qualitative researchers are interested in *understanding the meaning people have constructed*; that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 15). The focus for this study was an emic perspective—understanding teachers' interpretive processing and meaning making. Merriam and Tisdell guided my perspective of the design of the proposal when they summarized the four key characteristics of qualitative research: "The focus is on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive" (p. 15). Although I analyzed and interpreted the data, I did so in an effort to understand what was happening as teachers navigate their context and their use of *testimonios.*

Research Setting

DHE is a K–6 school with approximately 450 students and is a full TWBI program as of 2017–2018. DHE is located near Sacramento in northern California. In its 19-year history the school has had both a structured English immersion program, sometimes referred to as English only, a strand of Spanish immersion (one-way), and a strand TWBI program. With the current configuration, all 18 of the classroom teachers possess bilingual authorizations and conduct instruction in Spanish and English, beginning with a 90–10 ratio in kindergarten and first grade up to a 50–50 ratio from fourth through sixth grade. The school demographics are 36.1% students classified as English learners, 55% meeting the state -identified criteria to be considered

from families with low income, and 57.9% identifying as Latina/o/x. This demographic context is in sharp contrast to the other eight elementary schools in the district, including a Spanish language immersion program, which enrolls nearly 94% English-speaking (including reclassified fully English proficient) students, with 6.2% qualifying as English learners, and 10.2% meeting criteria to be classified as free and reduced lunch in 2019–2020 (CDE, 2020). That this second dual language school identifies as a "Spanish language immersion" program and not a TWBI program speaks to its racial and linguistic demographics, pedagogical practices, language allocation, and more. Beyond DHE, no other elementary schools in the district qualify as Title I school-wide, and none have English learner populations over 17.4%, with the district-wide average 10.4% (CDE, 2020). In 2018–2019, district-wide, 77.6% of teachers identified as White and 11.6% as Hispanic/Latino, whereas at DHE, 38% identified as Hispanic/Latino and 52% as White. With the transition to full TWBI by 2020–2021, the demographics—albeit pending from CDE—continued to shift toward Latina/o/x. DHE is, by many counts, one of the most racially and linguistically diverse schools in the district.

In its recent history, from 2016 to 2020, the school community underwent some dramatic changes, the largest of which was a transition from a strand TWBI program to the whole-school TWBI. This process included an in-depth analysis led by the site administrator where the learning community—certificated instructional staff, classified staff, families, students, and district administration—reviewed the system structure, policies and practices of the site that might be contributing to disproportionate student outcomes. Specifically, an analysis of instructional data showed very disproportionate outcomes when comparing the English-only and TWBI programs for students with disabilities, those classified as English learners or low income, and those who identified as Black, Latina/o/x, or Native American. Additionally, behavior

support and intervention were much higher in the English-only program. The entire learning community became engaged in a deep discussion and action planning around equity of instruction and access to TWBI. The school became united around a shared vision that in order to improve instructional equity and social justice, it needed to move to full TWBI. This is relevant setting information because it means that DHE is a learning community where equity is openly discussed and teachers are comfortable with asking each other and leadership hard questions about race, ethnicity, gender, language status, and other areas of potential impact.

That same transition aligned with an intensive course of 16 days over 2 years per teacher of research-based professional learning with the Sobrato Early Academic Language (SEAL) model. SEAL is a powerful English learner-focused approach to education rooted at the intersection of research and educational equity. The core values are a commitment to further developing the intellectual and linguistic genius of young children, honoring the value and role of a family's culture and language in students' lives, and helping teachers cultivate the skills and mindset they need to become powerfully effective educators. In addition, SEAL is a system-change approach and was instrumental in supporting the transition at DHE from a strand TWBI program to a whole-school model. Teachers were exposed to high-leverage instructional practices and given the coaching support for deep implementation, the research and knowledge base for effective biliteracy, and culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy. These shifts mean that the teachers who participated in this study have most likely significantly committed to the model and the instructional approach, and are looking toward self-improvement of pedagogical practices as a solution to instructional inequity. An important feature of this professional learning in SEAL includes practices and strategies that engage teachers in exploring their racial and linguistic histories (including and beyond *testimonios*). These workshops are often presented

during “Bilingual Convenings”—overnight professional learning gatherings of educators who work in K–6 dual language immersion programs (predominantly Spanish–English). DHE educators over the course of 5 years have been regularly attending these convenings.

In summary, the transition to full TWBI was a pivotal moment to solidify the approach of the school, in both the instructional changes and the data analysis with an equity lens, to look toward systemic and structural change, instead of symptomatic solutions that tend to be deficiency centered and shift blame toward students (e.g. more school counseling to solve “problematic behaviors” or additional tutoring or specialists for “far below basic students”). This group of teachers is committed to the goals and tenets of dual language education, as well as creating critically conscious educational spaces.

Participants

The six participants I interviewed had engaged in professional learning around the strategy of *testimonios* as a pedagogical practice, which means each had written their own *testimonio,* a story in which they highlight a personal experience of racism, linguicism, or other oppressions, and they have delivered it orally to either colleagues (other K–6 educators), families, and/or students. The teachers had engaged in a collaborative colleague workshop process to write their *testimonios*. In that process, they had a chance to pair share, and then to whole-group share. After these initial sharing experiences with colleagues, some teachers continued to develop and evolve their *testimonio* as they retold their story. To participate in this study, they also engaged in a process to consider how or if they might use the practice with students and/or families, such as in the form of a visual lecture or engaging students/families to write their own *testimonios* as a form of pedagogy. Four of six participants enacted the practice with students and families, but this was not a requirement to participate. Engaging students

and/or families in writing their own *testimonio* is not necessary in order to understand your own experience in writing and delivering.

The participants for this study were bilingual authorization teachers who identify as Latina/o/x from Dolores Huerta Elementary school's TWBI program. They had participated in professional learning around the practice of *testimonios*. I used snowball sampling, beginning with willing teachers from Dolores Huerta Elementary school who had engaged in workshops via SEAL to learn the pedagogical practice of *testimonios* and had delivered *testimonios* to colleagues and/or to families or students. Many of the teachers at DHE were in their teaching career year 2 to 8 and had themselves been schooled in K–12 under Proposition 227. Coincidentally, four of six teachers also were recent graduates of the UC Davis School of Education for their bilingual authorization, a program that centers equity and social justice in education, as evidenced by this portion of the mission statement, "to confront and eliminate inequities among people and communities through the generation of impactful knowledge and the promise of education" (University of California Davis School of Education, 2009).

Table 1. Participants

Number of Participants	Grade Levels Taught	Years Teaching	Language of Instruction for Their Own Elementary Schooling
6	K–6	Average 3.8 (Range 2–7)	1 English-only and Bilingual Program 3 English-only 1 Spanish (Out of U.S.) 1 English-only and Spanish (out of U.S.)

Data Collection

I conducted semistructured individual interviews with an interview protocol of 18 questions, with follow-up questions for probing as necessary. The interview protocol is at the end of this paper as Appendix A. I audio recorded and took notes during the interview, paying

attention to affect/mood reactions and nonverbal cues, and noted the social setting/context of the space (place, time, description of setting). I asked and encouraged teachers to bring their written *testimonio* or a video recording of the delivery, if they existed, to the interview so that they could use them as needed as an anchor artifact to remind them of the content and could share them with me during the interview if they desired. I asked for permission to retain artifacts and copies/recordings, to triangulate the interview data, and stored these in a secured electronic file. As I interviewed each participant, I kept a careful record (audit trail) of the dates, setting, and length of the interview. I stored the audio transcriptions in a password-protected cloud drive and shared the recordings only with a transcription service. The returned transcriptions were stored in the same folder as the audio recording, as well as field notes. Each folder was labeled with the first initial only of the participant and the date of the interview.

Data Analysis

I conducted an inductive analysis of the data from the interviews using open coding of the participants' transcribed responses. Inductive analysis via open coding should be done "with as open a mind as possible" (Saldaña, 2021, p. 41) because it is a process of discovery, "an exploratory problem-solving technique … that is not just labeling, it is *linking*" (Saldaña, 2021, p. 12). As Saldaña (2021) described, a code is "most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute …" (p. 5) of the qualitative data. These codes were generated from my analysis, and where possible I used "in vivo" language (Saldaña, 2021) because I wanted to capture the essence of and make meaning from the teacher's own discourse. I have retained these codes and used anchor quotes to help frame some of the headings in this paper.

After each interview I sent the recording out for transcription, and upon its return, prior to starting the open coding, I reviewed field notes and memos associated with the interview to remind myself of the context of the interview and the setting. Then I engaged in an initial round of open coding, which Saldaña said "is analysis—taking things apart" (2021, p. 6), looking for both themes that emerged from the participant's language and researcher-generated themes based on a close reading of the text. I wrote analytical memos to capture my thoughts around the initial coding.

After initial open coding, I engaged in a second cycle or read of the data and initial codes, which Saldaña (2021) clarifies "is synthesis—putting things together into new assemblages of meaning" (Saldaña, 2021, p. 6). This was the time to look for patterns that could be characterized as similarities, differences, frequency, sequences, or correspondences (Saldaña, 2021). This was also the time to look for categories and subcategories and to move toward, as Saldaña wrote, "consolidated meaning" (2021, p. 13). This was meant to be an iterative process for all of the interviews, and to be done as I moved through the interviews, as Saldaña suggests, coding as I collected rather than waiting for all of the fieldwork/interviews to conclude. However, due to a backlog in institutional review board (IRB) approvals and the omicron surge in COVID impacting all campuses, the timing of IRB approval meant that interviews were conducted over a much more condensed time frame of just under 1 week. For this reason, interviews were sent for transcription, cleaned, reviewed, and then entered into the CAQDAS program in a span of 36 to 48 hours. Coding began after all interviews were collected. Throughout, I organized my codes, categories and theme findings in a code book using Atlas.ti, a CAQDAS program. The process included a clear audit trail, with spreadsheets and options within the CAQDAS program to keep

organized the dates of interviews, transcriptions, coding, as well as and links to associated memos.

Criteria for Trustworthiness

For any study to be trustworthy, there must be both rigor and transparency, as well as "conducting the investigation in an ethical manner" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 237). To this end, I engaged in a clear audit trail, noted the process, steps and dates of collecting and analyzing the data. According to Merriam and Tisdell, "an audit trail in a qualitative study describes in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" (p. 252). Member checks were another tool I used for trustworthiness. I sent the transcribed interview to every participant for respondent validation. After initial open coding, I also conducted member checks with two of the participants to ask if the themes identified match the "perspective they have of what is going on" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 246). In the latter member checks I shared transcription pieces with initial open codes in order to verify agreement for respondent validation. Once all the member checks were completed, I further detailed and analyzed the codes and themes to inform my findings. Along the process, I engaged with my faculty advisor for review and discussion, using memos as one method of communication. All memos, code analyses, themes, and findings were stored in a separate folder from data collection folders and were also password protected.

Positionality

I enter into this research with many different lenses. First, I am the former principal of the school from July 2016 to June 2020 who led the transition and change of program structure to TWBI as described in the setting. I engaged in this work as a White woman who learned Spanish sequentially, by choice, positioned with the dominant and power language of English as

my home language. This in part means I have had (and will continue) to be reflective and careful about reinforcing the savior trope and language scripts—what it means in the K–12 system to be an emergent bilingual learner of English versus Spanish and how we systemically see one as asset based and one as a deficit. This positionality also meant that when I spoke about system equity, I did so from a vantage point of privilege that often allowed me to speak unabashedly and clearly in places of power such as BOE and district leadership meetings. This lens of seeing the school policies and system, and the teachers who do the heavy lifting, as an opportunity to revolutionize what high quality instruction and access means in Davis is what garnered the teachers' trust. The focus for me has always been on our structure, which classes students have access to, in what priority enrollment, which instructional practices we deliver, and how we staff the school, not on who the children are and their intersectional identities. Having led this transformation to all TWBI—when other principals tried and could not gain momentum—uniquely positions me to do this research at this school. I have access and relationships with the teachers, which means they were more likely to agree to participate and to do so with the vulnerability required to share authentic meaning of their lived racial, linguistic, and other identity-based experiences. I hired and recruited over 15 Latina/o/x bilingual teachers and staff, often pushing the district to make system level changes such as requiring bilingualism in job descriptions. Our office went from predominantly monolingual to all bilingual. These system and structure moves build capacity *and* trust. The teachers know that I will do right by their story to the very best of my ability.

My second lens is as a mother of children attending this school. My oldest child attended the school in the English-only program from fourth through sixth grade. My youngest, twins, have just entered fourth grade in the TWBI program and have attended their entire school career

there. I have seen with this mother's eye the disproportionality and the success. In my eldest's fourth-grade class, 67% of the students had already attended four *or more* elementary schools; 33% had an IEP; 74% were classified as free/reduced lunch. All of my children have benefited greatly from their classroom teachers, and nine of 11 have been teachers of color, which is unusual (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). I consider this to be a tremendous gift for my White kids to see and know teachers of color as their mentors and guides. According to the U.S. Department of Education, in 2015–2016, approximately 20% of teachers were teachers of color. Even taking this percentage—which we know is not evenly distributed across the United States—means most children might have one or two teachers of color out of every 10. Telling the story of these teachers is an opportunity to give back to them using my access as a scholar practitioner.

Finally, I am currently an employee of the SEAL organization, and my duties include conducting training for teachers and administrators around best practices for instruction and leadership for students classified as English learners. This means I have access to and conduct with a team, training on *testimonios* and I am familiar with the context of using them as a pedagogical practice. This also means that participants will view me as a trainer of the practice as well. This provides me a unique lens to analyze which stories are shared, how, and to what extent. As a presenter, I have also written and shared my own *testimonio,* which I have placed in Appendix B.

Limitation

I encountered a challenge that I would like to highlight, as well as the steps I took to respond. First, teacher availability was complicated given the context of COVID-19 and the latest omicron variant surge, which reclosed campuses. This moved my interviews from in

person as planned to Zoom, although I still used only audio recordings. Teachers have been navigating a wild transformation in the delivery of education these last 2 years, in addition to the social and emotional trauma of a pandemic. This could have limited willingness to participate in the research or willingness to further deliver *testimonios* if it felt like an extra duty. To mitigate this, I was transparent and ethical about the process, timelines, and requirements, and mindful and respectful of interview dates and lengths. All participants were incredibly timely and responsive between when I requested an interview and when it was conducted. I was surprised at how eager and willing they were to share. Only one potential participant declined to participate.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this inquiry is to determine how the use of *testimonios* as a pedagogical strategy connected bilingual teachers at Dolores Huerta Elementary to their own racial, social–cultural, and linguistic counternarrative and to learn about how this understanding of identity and voice informed how they interact with the school community. The bilingual teachers of color in this study had shared their *testimonios*—replete with racial, cultural, and linguistic and other intersectional identity experiences. These counterstories about how they grew their bilingualism and biliteracy in the face of hegemony, anti-immigrant sentiment, and other harmful and marginalizing linguistic and racial policies and practices in public schools impacted their view of self and how they interact with their communities. Studying how the practice and strategy of *testimonios* shaped these teachers' understanding of their bilingual, racial, and cultural identities and voice, and how it impacts their interactions and perceptions of the larger school community, can inform how the application of the strategy might be worth replicating and in what contexts.

Summary of Key Findings

The practice of *testimonios* at DHE has impacted bilingual teachers' view of their complex racial, linguistic, and cultural intersectional identities, and provided one avenue to express these identities and the related experiences that have shaped how they define, make sense, and express who they are in relationship to themselves and to others. The practice of *testimonios* has also impacted the way they interact with each other, families, students, and the larger school community, inclusive of how they view current raciolinguistic oppressions and wealths. Five overall themes emerged:

1. **DHE "a culture of being a village."** Teachers at DHE are deeply committed and connected to this specific school in the district for the racial, linguistic, and cultural

affinities, a raciolinguistic equity focus, and the sense of belonging, collaboration, and support among staff.

2. **Critically conscious counterstories: "A personal statement from the heart."** The counterstories teachers share via *testimonio* present opportunities to examine and acknowledge their racial, cultural, and linguistic intersectional identities, and in the act of telling and reflection, there exists a sometimes painful yet powerful recognition of raciolinguistic harms and oppressions, and a recasting of those experiences not as personal failures but as system failures.
3. **T*estimonios* as transformative pedagogy: "The work I do is valued."** Teacher participants express feeling a range of emotional responses, primarily with positive associations, and are often surprised at the intensity of their feelings.
4. ***Testimonios* influence interactions with the school community: "You're able to not assume but wonder."** The practice of *testimonios* is having a profound impact on the overall sense of interconnectedness between colleagues and between teachers and families, within the general school community and by raciolinguistic affinities.
5. ***Testimonios* influence pedagogical practices and student connections: "That's what makes it beautiful."** Teachers connect with students via sharing *testimonios*. The practice also shapes the importance teachers place on affirming languages, cultures, and identities of students, and it influences their use of pedagogical practices for identity development.

Themes Emerging in the Data

Theme 1: DHE "Culture of Being a Village"

I feel like this school just has this culture of being a village, like everybody looks after everybody.

—Leticia

Although the teacher participants in this study in general had a deep commitment and a sense of passion and calling to the profession, it was evident that there were specific characteristics, demographics, teacher experiences, and feelings that made DHE, specifically, a special and welcoming place that elicits strong positive associations. When speaking about teaching in general, Leticia said, "I never remember having any other dream besides being a teacher." Her colleague Olivia concurred, "But I knew back then at 7, that teaching was what I really wanted to do." Carla described the choice in this way: "For me, it was very important to choose a job that I would love because we spend so many hours working … Even if it's hard, but you have to love it." As the participants began to share more directly about DHE, there emerged a deep sense of commitment, an affinity and connection to DHE that goes beyond teaching in general. Heather clarified about being at DHE in particular when she shared, "I don't think I could be a teacher anywhere else … To be at DHE kind of feels like, I guess, for lack of better words, feels like being at home." Carla emphatically stated, "I started in DHE, and I stay in DHE, and I always tell everyone I hope to retire from DHE, because I love this school." This strong statement of connection elicited from Carla was echoed by many participants and is further explained by diving into the data in this theme.

The bilingual teachers at DHE are deeply committed and connected to this specific school for many reasons, including raciolinguistic and cultural affinities, a culture of collaboration and support amongst the adults, and a sense of purpose that working at DHE is associated with doing social justice and equity-centered work. First I will explore the raciolinguistic, cultural, and other demographic affinities. Then I will dive into the prevalence of

the culture of collaboration and support, and finally I will conclude with the perceptions of how working at DHE is viewed as equity-centered work.

Raciolinguistic, Cultural, and Other Affinities.

Racial Affinity. In a predominantly White district, with predominantly White elementary schools, DHE stands out demographically for its racial/ethnic, linguistic, and economic class diversity. The bilingual Latina/o/x teachers of color in this study identified racial, ethnic, and cultural affinities with the student and family population at DHE and cite this diversity as a specific reason to teach at DHE. Carla said:

> Yes, exactly. It's very diverse at DHE. And I love that, because especially for the little ones, because when they're so little, they still don't have prejudice and they treat everyone the same. They play with everyone. So it's nice to see that kids from these backgrounds playing together and being nice to each other and learning about different cultures. So, that's also very special.

Carla clearly also believed that opportunities presented by having a diverse classroom benefited student cross-cultural development.

When explaining what made DHE unique, Mikayla shared explicitly about racial identity: "Because what I think is so unique about DHE is … it's not predominantly White, you have a lot of Latin-American families." Several teachers connected seeing their own racial/ethnic, linguistic, and cultural experiences as being the same as or similar to those of the students and families and that this brought a sense of community, purpose, and satisfaction with working at DHE. For example, Heather shared, "Because all of a sudden you just kind of felt a sense of community there, and I felt really connected to the kids, just kind of seeing myself in them and getting to know their families." Esme explained that working with students with whose lived experiences she could connect was critical to job satisfaction:

> And for me, it's really important for me to also be working with students that have lives that I can empathize with and help them see that if there's a lot going on at home, then

> school can be a space that can be safe for them, and also can provide so many opportunities for them.

I want to be clear that Esme felt empathy in terms of connection and access to opportunity, not empathy as pity.

Linguistic affinity. Linguistic affinity for bilingualism and emergent bilingual Spanish speaking children of color also appeared to be a DHE-specific affinity factor. Mikayla described her desire to be a bilingual teacher as connected to students who are learning English:

> I think second language acquisitions, what really caught my attention to begin with. And even then I didn't look at second language acquisition as in an English-Spanish learner context. I was thinking more someone who's learning English as a second language.

Carla also recognized that a special component of DHE was the teachers' ability to connect with the linguistic experience of students and families classified as English learners, who may also be immigrants, grappling with a raciolinguistically hostile climate. She explained:

> And I think that also makes DHE a special place because we understand what learning a second language means or speaking with an accent or leaving your culture and your family and moving to a new place and starting a new life, which is difficult. So we had a lot of those experiences here like transition and what is to adopt a new culture and change your whole lifestyle.

Carla described a shared linguistic identity as a bilingual person as a point of connection and understanding with families and students.

One of the participants, Leticia, is also a parent of a child enrolled at the school and she described how the process of recruitment to DHE was enhanced by the chance to bring her child to the school for the bilingual aspect. She reported, "… I thought, 'Oh my gosh, this might just be really great for my child.' Especially because I always wanted him to be bilingual." She continued and explained how language identities connect the people at DHE:

> And language-wise, too, everybody's speaking or trying to speak both languages, Spanish and English, whether native or not. And just trying to help each other.

For Leticia, language development, language identity around bilingualism, support, and the sense of community were intertwined.

For Heather, there was linguistic and racial affinity with the Latina/o/x students at DHE because she saw herself/her intersectional identities in them and the contrast of experiences and opportunities.

> I also am a bilingual teacher because, as a little girl, I never had a teacher that looked like me. And once I got to know the families at DHE it was kind of just eye-opening, like wow, I get to be a bilingual teacher for *these* kids. That means a lot to me too as well, because to be a bilingual teacher is kind of like honoring my family, my grandparents especially, and my own parents. Just because they never had opportunities that I did. So every day I walk into work, it's kind of like, wow, I'm here because of my grandma and grandpa, pretty much.

Moreover, she connected being a bilingual teacher at DHE as a way to honor her family. She saw her work at DHE as a bridge between generations, crossing over access and opportunity gaps, carrying a rich raciolinguistic history, a counterstory by which she could honor her ancestors. And in particular, she saw the importance of being a bilingual teacher for "these" kids—the children with whom she identified linguistically, racially, and culturally.

> Olivia also described a deep connection and affinity for bilingual families. She said:
>
> Oh, it means the world. I have had the opportunity to have such deep connections to bilingual families. And it's because of the language. The language has opened up all of these doors to communication, and communication is key … when they respond, it just, it's magic. We talk about their children, how to better their children's education, how they could help their children.

For Olivia, her language opened "doors" to connect deeply with families, and she was proud of her work.

Migrant status affinity. Two teachers specifically mentioned students whose families migrated for work as a particular affinity area. Heather calls this out when discussing what made DHE unique. She said, "Because you learn these kids and their families, and especially, we have a migrant population, and just the story too in these kids, it's just kind of different." Olivia,

especially, connected with families who migrated for work because she herself comes from a similar background. On why she became interested in teaching at DHE, she shared:

> I was at my last semester at Sac State and the opportunity came to be an intern. And I looked for jobs and DHE had an opening for kindergarten. And when I came to do a tour, the principal, one of the first things she mentioned was that they host migrant families here at DHE. And so that just, wow. I told myself I want to be there. And that's what I was all about. Working with migrant families, working with families that need advocating. And so my dream came true.

Similar to Heather, Olivia saw working with students whose families migrated as an opportunity to give back to her community and to recognize the counterstory of perseverance. Both of her parents came from families who migrated for work, and she described the intergenerational toll this took on her mother and her mother's siblings and how she saw her teaching as a way to help. Olivia recalled:

> My mom tells me stories about … Because it was her father that had it tough. He had it very tough with his kids being back home, him having to migrate over here. He would take the eldest of them back over to … They did this in Florida. Back to Florida to work with him. And then they'd travel back and she said that her siblings never got to go to school because of that. And so knowing all this, I wanted to take part in helping them, right? Educating their children. Providing their children with the best education that I as a teacher could provide.

On her father's side of the family, there was also intergenerational migration for work. Olivia reported that "having that background of knowing people so close to me in that field just made me want to help them." Olivia connected to the migrant experience in some of her students and this helped fuel her commitment and connection to DHE.

Culture of Collaboration and Support.

All participants referenced a sense of comfort, connection, and collaboration between the staff, and many generalized this into a positive feeling of "community" and "culture" within the school. Leticia described one of the reasons why DHE was special as "definitely the school culture and the support. We have very supportive staff, very close staff. My grade level,

especially, in particular, we plan very closely, I always feel very supported by them." She continued to describe the collaboration and support by adding, "They always come through in ways I did not even expect them or ask them to." For Leticia, this connection and support was unexpected.

Her first-grade colleague, Carla, shared how the staff helped her feel comfortable when she said,

> And I love DHE because I know the program. I know the people that work here and I really get along with them. So I was thinking of a place where I would feel comfortable, that I would love to go every day.

After she landed the job teaching at DHE, Carla reported, "So I was very excited because it was a familiar place. And I love the community feeling that DHE has." Heather concurred with Carla in her perception of community. When describing the comfort level of being around other teachers who share raciolinguistic experiences, she said, "And even just as staff at DHE, it was really nice to see people who shared common experiences. We could talk about our families and whatnot, and it just felt like home really." Comfort, connection, support helped define the "community" feeling at DHE.

Some participants described the DHE "community" feeling in terms of contrast with their own experiences as a student teacher, or in contrast from listening to colleagues who taught at other school sites in the district. Esme related the contrast of what she saw at DHE to her student teaching placement:

> But when I did my student teaching, the type of community that DHE has wasn't there. The principal didn't know the names of the student teachers and other student teachers were sharing their experiences as well. And just the feeling of community, even though that I wasn't a part of it yet, DHE just felt like a place that I wanted to belong at.

As I will show for Esme in other theme findings, this sense of community and belonging was very important, and she worked hard to replicate this environment for her students.

Another second-year teacher in this study, Mikayla, recognized that compared to teachers in a similar year at other schools she seemed to have more support:

> My peers who did the credential program with me, and every now we'll meet up and we're like, "Hey, how's it going?" … I feel like my peers, unfortunately, for their situation, they always seem to have … well, it feels like a longer list of negatives about their school site, or a longer list of negatives about how they're feeling supported or lack of support at their school sites compared to me … whether it's from their site admin, or from their grade-level colleagues, or just not having much guidance on how the district works, things like that.

Mikayla summed up the feeling she had at DHE in contrast when she said, "And I got back to how I genuinely feel like DHE is a very positive school with an excellent school culture." Defining her experience in terms of contrast with her peers helped Mikayla explain how her school was unique. For Carla, talking about the sense of community at DHE, in contrast to the other immersion site in Davis where she did an internship, was emotional:

> I actually did an internship in the other bilingual school in Davis for a whole year. And I like the program, the programs are very similar because we're teaching Spanish, but the community feeling was so different because I don't know, there's something special about, everyone's very welcoming and they treat you like you're family. So you feel very comfortable going to work. It doesn't feel like working with strangers. I'm going to try not to cry.

Carla had a deep comfort with her grade-level colleagues at DHE. She described them fondly as family. Clearly, she was not alone in her sentiments of connection, belonging, and support at DHE.

A note on White allyship. One teacher also commented on the allyship experience with White teachers at DHE and how, as a teacher of color, she felt comfortable and safe. When speaking about a White coworker who was being aware of her White positionality when listening to her *testimonio*, Esme shared:

> Having grown up in a predominantly White community, even some of the friendships that I had, it was really awkward for me to sometimes navigate those, but I have never felt unsafe by the interactions that I've had with my coworkers. And so for me, I

> understand them reflecting their identity in that way, but I am just so grateful to feel comfortable around them where it's not even a question.

Esme expressed a sense of safety and comfort around her White colleagues and compared this with other experiences of growing up in a predominately White neighborhood that felt more challenging to navigate.

Teaching at DHE as Raciolinguistic Equity Work

Several teachers in this study described teaching at DHE as a specific connection to engaging in equity-centered or social justice-related work, beyond racial, linguistic, and cultural affinities. They tied this work to critical consciousness and activism. When talking about being a bilingual teacher at DHE, Esme said she wanted students to be

> able to use the tools and leveraging both languages to help. And so being like active agents in their communities, it's not just about them putting themselves before other people, but we're all equal … we can help our community. And so for me, it's just really stressing the importance of social justice and equity into being a bilingual teacher.

For Esme education had been transformational in her life, and becoming a bilingual teacher was one opportunity to continue to create conditions for transformation in her students' lives. Esme also had the opportunity to do a 30-hour observation in DHE when she was in undergrad, and it had a lasting impact on her wanting to become a teacher, and to be one at DHE:

> And it was so valuable for me to see students in a dual immersion program, so proud of their identity and so proud of who they are, but also very critical of the world. I remember doing my 30-hour observation for one of my education classes. And one of the students that I had last year was talking about Christopher Columbus and she was like, "Cristóbal Colón es un estúpido!" And she went off … but to have the confidence that she had at that age and to be so aware of different things that have happened in history was just so rewarding. I was like, I'm sold. I'm going to be a teacher from here on out.

What stands out in that quote to me as a researcher is that Esme connected with the student's sense of pride, her bilingualism, *and* her critically conscious view of Christopher Columbus. It is the intersections of this experience.

In a pre-service project Mikayla worked during her student teacher year interviewing sixth grade students about their views of bilingualism and bilingual identity at DHE. She said:

> The picture that I painted for myself of DHE was that it was a school that respected students' learning and respected students' identities when it came to recognizing that they were definitely juggling emerging identities when it came to themselves as little humans, who are developing and growing, and becoming their own person, but also, the intersection of them being … becoming bilingual, which can sometimes be a conflicting identity depending on a student's household and upbringing.

This sense she had from her project made DHE a place she wanted to work as a bilingual teacher, to join a community that recognizes and supports raciolinguistic identity development as complex and potentially conflicting identity work for students.

> So I definitely got this idea that DHE was this magical school that definitely not only made students feel welcome and wanted, but definitely challenged students in a way that created a sense of pride amongst the students, which was important.

For Mikayla, her project on student bilingual identity development, and the positive data she collected, influenced her decision to pursue a position at DHE.

Heather as well felt a sense of community from connecting with other colleagues who view this work as equity or social justice related. She shared,

> It's hard to explain. But there's a sense of community there when you get to know the people that we serve, and how we're just getting … The main goal at DHE is, at least for the bilingual portion, I think it's, we're in it for the equity piece.

She continued by clarifying:

> I'm talking about the Black and Brown kids. Not the White kids especially. It's great that we teach them another language, but to give, to honor, especially, our Latino community, our Spanish-speaking community, to give them the opportunity to continue to learn in their home language, and to help them achieve goals that … In the past, schools have always gone against them, and I feel like at DHE we're reaching out to them and saying, "We're in this together."

Heather explicitly named Black and Brown kids and countering systemic racism in schools that have been historically hostile to children of color as a purpose for teaching at DHE.

Theme 2: Critically Conscious Counterstories: "A Personal Statement From the Heart."

It's almost like a personal statement from the heart, where you have the opportunity to speak your brave truth about yourself unapologetically.

—Mikayla

The racial, linguistic, cultural, and personal counterstories teachers share via *testimonio* present opportunities to examine and acknowledge their intersectional identities. In the act of telling and reflection, there exists a sometimes painful yet powerful recognition of raciolinguistic harms and oppressions, and a recasting of those experiences not as personal failures but as system failures. For example, when describing the counterstory she shared in her *testimonio*, Olivia said, "That specific experience was so traumatic that I can still remember it so well in my mind." And as an adult processing her *testimonio* she shared, "I think as an adult now looking back and writing about this experience, I feel so empowered." These recastings, similar to what Olivia just described, occurred in these teachers across three main areas. First, teachers described experiences related to English-only/Prop 227 hegemony and the practices and policies of language, race, and culture exclusion from school systems. Heather's *testimonio* was an example of language exclusion when she explained, "… then I would go to school, and then it was kind of like, I could only bring my English with me. And no one knew that I was bilingual." She left half of her tongue at home, and as I will discuss, this language exclusion left her feeling confused and lost. Second, teachers shared and reflected on instances of raciolinguistic registry oppression, whereby their registries of Spanish language were not seen as academic enough, or as inauthentic because they were heritage Spanish learners, both of which contributed to self-doubt and shame. Mikayla said, "Despite being … realizing I speak most of the week in Spanish, not in English, I still feel so self-conscious about my Spanish," when describing her registry shame. Finally, teachers described racialized intersectional identity oppression and harm around skin color and other physical features, language use/choice, and culture/heritage, which led to feeling lost,

unsure, incomplete, and confused. As Heather wrote in her *testimonio*, "And there I was, confundida, confused. No one ever asked how I felt: out of place, constantly questioning who I was. A Latina, where did I fit in?" In each of these areas, recasting occurred that recognized these oppressions and harms as functions of racism and linguicism, with White supremacy systems' policies, practices, and failures (and the people who perpetuate these systems) at the heart. This critical consciousness occurred at the individual level—meaning teachers recast their own experiences and recognized how the system perpetrated harm or failed to accept, protect, or affirm their languages, cultures, and identities. In some cases, the recasting also led to a recognition of current injustices and harms.

Oppressive Policies of Language Exclusion: "And the Many Words I Said Did Not Matter."

Many of the participants shared experiences where their Spanish language, and Latina/o/x race and culture, were not welcome or valued in their own elementary schooling. The denial by both the system policies and practices—the exclusion of languages other than English in the curriculum, instruction, course offerings, and in the school climate—and by individuals in the system questioning language abilities, acting surprised or demanding, left teachers at the time feeling confused, lost, and partial, like they were not "enough." In some cases, the experience was described as traumatic. Yet in the course of writing, speaking, and then reflecting on their *testimonios*, teachers recast those feelings of something being wrong with them or part of their tongue, as something being wrong with the system. They recognized these experiences as English-only hegemony and the effects of Proposition 227.

Olivia's *testimonio* and her reflection are examples of this recasting. In her *testimonio*, Olivia shared her experience as an emergent bilingual (Spanish dominant) kindergarten student

in an English-only-instructed classroom. She dives deeply into one specifically poignant memory in a *testimonio* workshop with colleagues, where she felt safe and able to share. She said:

> I shared my beginning of school experience and I think, that was because it still … That specific experience was so traumatic that I can still remember it so well in my mind. And that was back when I was 6, so almost three decades ago. I think just being at that time, a monolingual (Spanish) child in a different language, in being in a classroom of a different language, that was also like monolingual (English). The language that I spoke at the time wasn't the language spoken in the classroom. And that just, I never thought it'd have such a great impact negatively in someone's life.

Olivia could remember this moment vividly. As she delivered her *testimonio* to this researcher, she paused at points, emotional, tears flowing. Her *testimonio* reads, in part, here:

> *I desperately looked around for my friend, but I could not find her anywhere. I did find my teacher and I ran up to her as fast as I could. When she saw me coming right away, she came down to me probably because she saw the desperation on my face. I asked her "¿Puedo ir al baño?"*
>
> *But she just shrugged her shoulders and asked, "What did you say?" I asked her again, "¿Por favor, me dejar ir al baño?" But yet again, she responded, "What did you say?" And I kept getting the same response every time. I desperately tried to look for my friend. She was my only hope. I couldn't find her. Not in the playhouse, not at the lite-bright station, not in the indoor sandbox, nowhere. And there I stood next to my teacher for what seemed an eternity but what was probably 2 minutes.*
>
> *Finally, my friend walked up to me like she knew I needed her to save me. And I asked her, "Can you please ask our teacher to let me go to the bathroom." She said about five words. And the teacher walked me hand in hand to the bathroom. I wish back then that I had known those words. Those five words that led my teacher to give me what I needed at that moment. But I didn't. I didn't because I didn't know her language. And the many words that I said didn't matter, at least not then because she couldn't understand any of them.*

Such a powerful moment when she described her 6-year-old self, with many words, still unable to be heard. A teacher, an adult, who could have had visuals, called over her friend, or done one of many other interventions to communicate, instead stood, paused, and repeated herself multiple times.

In her reflection of her kindergarten experience during the interview, Olivia felt angry, and this anger in part was connected to her recasting. She explained:

> And this language barrier could have been easily taken care of if I had been taught in the classroom per se, the words needed to express myself or express my needs or on the part of the teacher. Her taking the time … Taking the time to learn my language, even if it was a few words, a few phrases, in order to help us break through that barrier.

At multiple points in the interview Olivia described the "culture shock" of being a monolingual Spanish-speaking 6-year-old in a classroom where English was the only language present. She had one other child who was bilingual, her friend, whom she related in her *testimonio* was "her only hope." The classroom lacked the practices and tools to support her emergent bilingual language development, and the teacher lacked the skill and knowledge (perhaps belief system, too?) to make Olivia's words have meaning to her adult ears. The teacher and the system failed Olivia in that moment she so eloquently described in her *testimonio*.

When offered an opportunity to send a message to her kindergarten self, Olivia said: "I think that I would have possibly just suggested: use your actions, show." In this moment, the researcher-insider engaged to wonder about further recasting. This was not on a 6-year-old to make the cross-linguistic connection. This was a system failure. And so we explored what happened the next year, in first grade when Olivia attended a bilingual program. Olivia described her experience in the bilingual developmental early exit program in first grade as so impactful, she credited her bilingual teacher as being one of the reasons she pursued a teaching career. When asked how she knew in first grade that she wanted to be a bilingual teacher, she said:

> I think that first grade teacher, Ms. Serrano, she just … She was so wonderful and dedicating herself to each of us, and just being a warm demander, right? She was warm, but she demanded so much of us, and it took that one year to just change my perspective on whom I wanted to become.

Olivia was schooled K–6 in the years right before Prop 227, from 1991 to 1997, when bilingual education was still allowed. I asked her about the move to a bilingual program, and what was involved in that choice. She described perfectly the system failure: "We moved … It was just coincidence." Her parents enrolled her in the new, closer elementary school, which just happened

to be a bilingual program in the same school district. This is where the system policy and practices perpetuate linguicism and racism—by not having the program available, or at least, by not informing parents of the option and allowing choice. We spoke about what would have happened if her parents had not moved, and Olivia said: "Exactly. Had I stayed at the monolingual school. I don't know. I don't know what we … What would I be right now? I don't know." Perhaps a change in the course of her career, her bilingualism, but by saying "What would I be right now?" she alluded to the potential stripping of her essence, of being.

Olivia moved this experience with her reflection and critical consciousness toward an asset-based view of her linguistic wealths, and in her *testimonio* she wrote:

> *I think as an adult now looking back and writing about this experience, I feel so empowered. So empowered because I now have the power to use both my languages and help my students.*

Olivia had recast her experience toward one of linguistic power and wealth, and note, not just for herself, but in use in the system with her students so that the experience was not repeated. The colleagues, students, and families, and this researcher, who had the opportunity to listen to Olivia's *testimonio* experienced the inside view of the scars of the English-only era through the eyes of a 6-year-old Latina child whose language was not affirmed, welcomed, or included in the classroom.

For Heather, *testimonios* were an opportunity to express the intersections between race and language, to acknowledge systemic raciolinguistic harms, and to honor her family and heritage. When asked about which identities she chose to share, Heather reported that she began by focusing on her raciolinguistic identities and the effect that the English-only environment had on her:

> I shared that I was bilingual, Mexican American. … I'll start first with the bilingual piece. Because this was something that, as a kid, I always kind of felt like there was only half of me that I could express. It was really hard for me … I was oftentimes with my

> grandparents, who only spoke Spanish. But then I would go to school, and then it was kind of like, I could only bring my English with me. And no one knew that I was bilingual. Even through high school, I remember, once they figured out that Spanish 1 was too easy for me they were like, "You can be the Spanish TA," that kind of thing. It was kind of a shock to everyone. Also in college, when I got to college and people heard me talk to my grandparents on the phone, they were just kind of jaw-dropped. Their jaw just kind of dropped, because they're like, "Oh, she speaks Spanish."

The theme of crossing between the world of her home and family, where she felt seen and heard literally and figuratively, to the world of schools where her bilingualism and specifically her Spanish was hidden or questioned permeated her *testimonios* in many ways. It started by giving the listener a window into the warmth, familiarity, and love with her grandparents and then sharply punctuated the contrast when crossing to school:

> *"XX," my amá would say to my apá when she saw me. And she would look at him and say, "Allí viene tus ojitos de rana," here comes your little frog eyes. That was me, and my job when I was with them to go with them to the doctor's office, the grocery store, and the bank. And I'd have to look them in the eyes and quickly see and know when I needed to switch my tongue between two languages so that they could communicate with who was helping us. It was me, Mexican American bilingual me.*
>
> *But then I would go to school and the questions would come flying at me like a swarm of bees. From my peers I would hear, "Do you know how to speak Spanish? Say something. How are you Mexican?" From teachers I heard, "Your English is great, let's place you in advanced English." And finally in high school, when they realized I spoke Spanish, "Let's make you the Spanish TA."*
>
> *And there I was, confundida, confused. No one ever asked how I felt: out of place, constantly questioning who I was. A Latina, where did I fit in? I didn't know what to say. I couldn't embrace the other part of my tongue. It was tied so tight that I couldn't embrace all of me. I thought it was okay.*

Heather used her *testimonio* to process English-only hegemony. She related the experience of her Spanish language being denied or hidden at school and the effect of going back and forth between languages as part of her tongue being restricted. She felt confused and unsure. Heather shared:

> I'd go back and forth between languages, whether I was at school or at home. I felt like half of my tongue was always tied. I couldn't use this piece here, or I couldn't use that there … So I always felt confused, especially in a school setting and around peers,

> because once it would slip out that I spoke Spanish, they'd be like, "Oh." But I felt like I never fit in with anyone … but it was always like, I don't know, who am I actually? Where do I go, where do I fit?

The doubt about who she was, again the core of her being, was perpetrated by systems being unable and unwilling to engage and affirm all aspects of her languages and culture. She described the error with herself when she said, "I never fit in," when in actuality, it was the system and English-only schooling that rejected her Spanish.

In her processing via *testimonio*, she had recast these experiences of confusion and doubt into recognition of racism and linguicism. Heather said:

> Just really working through the process of what I've experienced. … I made a shift once I realized, oh my gosh, all these things have been happening to me, and I guess a form of racism, linguicism, have all been happening.

There was surprise, there was an awakening to what had happened, and a recasting. Her reframe was one of acknowledging what had occurred not as a flaw of who she was and how she fit, but of a system that did not allow her full self to actualize. Heather was born in 1996, and graduated high school in 2013. Her schooling was completely done under Prop 227, and, as we will see in the next section, the English-only effect carries over to raciolinguistic registry judgment in her credential and college years.

Raciolinguistic Registry Oppression: "Another White Woman Telling Me My Spanish Wasn't Academic Enough."

Two of the participants, Mikayla and Heather, focused part of their *testimonios* around raciolinguistic oppression related to registry of Spanish. Mikayla shared how she struggles with being self-conscious about her Spanish language abilities:

> I spend the majority of my day speaking in Spanish yet, despite being … realizing I speak most of the week in Spanish, not in English, I still feel so self-conscious about my Spanish. There are times where I ask myself like, "Oh my gosh, who thought it was a good idea to allow me to teach children in Spanish?" But I was sharing that with her, with

> this confidence that this is just part of … or runs through my head every single day at work.

Full disclosure: this researcher interviewed and hired Mikayla. She was at the top of the candidate pool, amongst an extremely competitive and well-qualified group. Mikayla recognized that her language ability was connected to Prop 227 English-only hegemony. She said:

> I didn't grow up speaking Spanish. My parents, you know it was Proposition 227 era here in California where bilingual education was frowned upon for so many years. Despite my parents having bilingual credentials and teaching … growing up on the U.S.–Mexico border, my parents still chose to speak to me in English as a child, which didn't … obviously it didn't deter me from learning Spanish, but Spanish didn't become as natural of a language as it could have been had I been spoken to it from birth from a real … from a very young age.

Mikayla recognized Prop 227 and the impact it had on her language—punctuated by the knowledge that both of her parents were bilingually authorized educators. The great influence of this era runs deep. However, after she shared this aspect of her language identity with her colleague via *testimonio*, she felt liberated. She said:

> There was a certain liberating feeling of knowing that I never have to justify myself to other people in terms of who I am, and why I am the way I am, but it felt like a very nice, safe way for me to share like, I might choose to speak in English preferably over Spanish, But this is why, and now you know why, and it is what it is. And kind of becomes, I think for me, it felt like I addressed my own elephant in the room.

Mikayla moved from self-doubt to a place of liberation. She could use both of her languages when and how she saw fit. In the interview she described how colleagues might understand now why she responded in English to a *hola* in the staff room, and that it didn't mean she wanted them to stop using Spanish with her, she just wanted everyone to be fully actualized in whichever language they choose. She was resisting self-judgment, and moving to a place of affirmation and liberation, seeing her linguistic wealths.

In her *testimonio* with colleagues, Heather took the opportunity to explore another aspect of raciolinguistic harm she had experienced. Connected, yet distinct, Heather described a

moment when her registry of Spanish came into question, and how that almost changed the course of her bilingual teacher career trajectory. She recalled:

> I started with the story of what I experienced in my grad school interview. That it was another White woman telling me that my Spanish wasn't academic enough, and that I just didn't feel enough for her. She was the reason why I didn't want to go into the bilingual program, now that I think about it. And I can name it. It was that experience in that interview that I was like, she's telling me that I'm not good enough, then why am I going to go be at a school just to have other people tell me I'm not good enough?

Heather reflected that the moments of hearing her Spanish language was not the "right" or "academic" registry contributed to a sense of self-doubt—and she could attach the racialized oppressive layer to this experience because it came from a White sequential bilingual woman, someone who learned Spanish in college. Through processing, she reframed this moment: she could "name it" as a preference by the system for sequential bilingualism privilege, as access and equity issue. She shared:

> I actually feel like, in the past, when I think about it, it's been like, people who've had the privilege to go to college and speak and learn Spanish, that I always feel intimidated around them, or just kind of judged, because of what people have said about, "not academic enough."

After processing her own raciolinguistic oppression, she recognized in her current context moments of similar raciolinguistic harm when during a staff meeting this school year the leadership offered professional development in Spanish. Heather reported that the leader wanted to

> focus a little bit more on academic Spanish, and that "we owe it to our families to teach them that 'parquear' is not the proper term to use when you're trying to say you're parking your car." For me personally, when I heard this I was just taken aback.

This moment for Heather was jarring, and impactful. She continued to reflect:

> It was kind of like a jab at my heart, I guess, just considering everything that I've been through. Especially what I explained in my *testimonio*, that it was like … I kind of just looked around, and it was like, the heck, I'm not going to tell my families, "Your Spanish isn't right," that it's not quote-unquote "academic," when really … language is constantly changing.

Here she connected her *testimonio* to her processing of this moment, connected it to her own recasting, and moved into a resistance space. She said:

> And everything we've been taught through SEAL is like, I'm not going to have my families check their language at the door because I don't think it's academic enough, because someone who had the privilege to go to college and get their degree in Spanish is telling me they're not enough.

It is so powerful that this bilingual teacher—raised and schooled in Prop 227, battling and processing her own experiences of raciolinguistic registry judgment—could lean into a space of recasting "colloquial" language registry deficit lens to one of access and privilege with bachelor's degrees and sequential learning, and speak up.

Racialized Intersectional Identity Oppression: "Ni de Aquí, Ni de Allá"

Many of the participants' counterstories were connected to a deficit lens view by others of their racial, linguistic, cultural, and other intersectional identities. In particular, this deficit view was about the racialization and rejection of intersectionality, a questioning or denial of combinations of skin, language, race, ethnicity, and class. The deficit lens led teachers to experience self-doubt, shame, a closing off of parts of their identities in different settings, and a deep questioning connected to self-actualization, meaning a questioning of "Who am I?" if who I am is not permitted. Teachers experienced this racism in forms of others racializing their skin color, names, use of language(s), and other features in an attempt to deconstruct, categorize and segregate. Through reflection and processing of their *testimonios*, teachers shared a recasting of these experiences toward affirmations and acceptance of intersectionality and asset lens of their races, languages, cultures, and other identities.

In Leticia's *testimonio*, she explored an experience from her youth that highlighted the intersections of language, race, culture, and schooling in both Spanish while in Mexico and English while in California. She described in detail what she chose to share:

> In that *testimonio* I shared about a time … I think the focus was sort of around language that time. And I shared about a time when I was attending school in Mexico, in middle school. And this is a time where socially, we are awkward and we're just trying to look for acceptance. And I was the only, what you would call, girl from *el norte*. That's what they'd say about people who come from the U.S. And I was born in the U.S., even though I spent like half of my childhood in both countries. But I was seen as *la del norte*. And I was fluent in English, but I didn't want to use it because it was out of place. I wanted to assimilate, I didn't want to stand out.

Her *testimonio* was an opportunity to highlight the complexity of navigating intersectional identities and both languages, especially the power language. She said her *testimonio* was about linguistic and cultural identities when she said:

> Linguistically, because being bilingual and trying to navigate what the language of power or accepted language is. But also culturally, because I also shared how after we moved from Mexico, we ended up in a town that was mostly Caucasian, English, not a lot of people that looked like me or almost no one that I could find spoke Spanish.

Leticia set the stage for a counterstory about her bilingual and bicultural identities and the memorable moment as a young teen when she felt forced and shamed into one identity. Her *testimonio* read, in part:

> *I was the only student in the class who was del norte, meaning from the United States. But this was my least favorite class, inglés. I had to use the bathroom, I raised my hand. "¿Puedo ir al baño?" "En inglés," replied el profe. "¿Puedo ir al baño?" I ask again. "En inglés y puedes ir," he insisted. I don't want to look like a show-off to my peers, but I really have to go. "Can I go to the bathroom?" I hesitantly request. "Yes." Upon my return, my worst fear came true. My cousin told me the kids had been talking about me being a show-off. That was it, I was not speaking any more English while I was in this school, in this town, in this country.*
>
> *We soon had to move back to the United States where I would be expected to speak English. However, my fears of speaking came with me. I went to a school with almost no Spanish speakers and no one who looked like me, I felt out of place entirely.*

As a child she processed the system's inability to see her and hold her in the spaces of "and"—the intersections. Her least favorite class was English, despite her fluency, because it would mean an "othering" and rejection by her peers, when what she wanted was to desperately fit in and to be seen as Mexican, not Mexican American. She recalled:

> When I was in that age, I mostly wanted to identify as Mexican. But thinking back on it, I was like, "Well, I couldn't really just say I'm Mexican because I wasn't seen by others as just Mexican, obviously." Because they were talking about me for using a language that I also have, English, and sort of rejecting that part of me. So that also got me thinking like, I'm not just Mexican.

Leticia related the power of wanting to be just one identity but realizing that doing so would be a rejection of part of herself. The purpose and power of this story for Leticia was the opportunity to describe how her intersections were not welcome, and feeling like she had to choose one or the other. At first she wondered if her counterstory was impactful, yet upon reflection she recognized that bilingual children like her might feel othered or "not from here or there." She wondered:

> Was that a very impacting story to share? Like maybe it wasn't very strong. But the more I thought about it, especially going back to it now for this interview, I was like: No, I think it is important. Because I think there's probably others out there that have had my experiences who have had to attend school in both places and feel that, like you said, having to make a choice, what do you identify with? Who are you? … Ni de aquí, ni de allá.

This is an interesting point Leticia made: there is power in both the telling of the *testimonio* and also the reflection and processing of the *testimonio.* She shared:

> So I felt, okay, I have a different identity, I'm Mexican and American. And I found, especially once I got to Sacramento, that there's others with me on that boat that can't identify and don't want to identify with just one or the other. Because there's parts of both that you appreciate and embrace.

Leticia embraced her intersectionalities, and, via *testimonio* and her reflection, she also acknowledged that her counterstory was important, it was valid, and it was worth centering and telling. She reframed and recast, and reflected on processing this via her *testimonio* in this way:

> But after having that experience of processing that part of my identity, I feel more comfortable sharing it because now I do feel it's powerful. Even though back then I hesitated, is this even very significant? But now I realize it is.

She concluded her storytelling with saying, "I'm so happy that I ended up coming to Sacramento and discovering this world of multiculturalism and being able find that part of me. Yeah.

Bilingual and bicultural me." In her intersections of language and culture she accepted all part of herself. Leticia was not the only participant who recast and processed intersectionality in her *testimonio*.

For Mikayla, while *testimonios* were an opportunity to share her intersectional racial, linguistic, and cultural identities, they were also an opportunity to comment on the marginalization and attempts to categorize and simplify her intersectional identities that she experienced from others. Mikayla explained why she shared about her ethnicity and how it intersected with her languages:

> I chose to share also about my ethnicity, because I am Mexican American. My mom was born in Mexico, in Jalisco. My dad, he was born here in the United States, in the Central Valley. And there's this idea, I think people have that because I'm so light skinned, I can't possibly be Mexican. And then coupled with the fact that I didn't grow up speaking Spanish … I also chose to talk to her about being Mexican, because I felt like, all throughout my life it's, "Wait, you're Mexican, but how can you be Mexican if you don't speak Spanish?"

Mikayla shared her bilingual identity as a point of concern or denial from others, where they demand performance. She said,

> Then I continued on with the language identity. 'Can you say something in Spanish then? Prove it, prove it. Can you truly be Mexican if you don't speak Spanish?' And so, that's how I incorporated … that's how I felt in the moment.

Mikayla was a bilingual authorized teacher—she was bilingual and biliterate. She shared so succinctly the raciolinguistic oppression she had experienced as others attempted to simplify, deny, and question the intersection of her language and race/ethnicity. In the interview, she outlines in great detail the nuanced layers of these experiences when she shared:

> As if an ethnicity and a language inherently are tied together, because they're not. Everyone has different life experiences that either prevent them from holding maybe a stereotypical experience, or a stereotypical ability. And I shared it with her also because I felt like my ethnicity and also how White passing I am, which I think is the third intersectional identity there, given that I hold more privilege in certain spaces because of my White passingness, it leads people to say, "Well, how can you be Mexican if you're so light skinned?"

Skin color, language, her name, her bilingualism (and confidence in her bilingualism), her privileges and oppressions, wove together so profoundly in her *testimonio*. Here is Mikayla's *testimonio* in full:

> *You're Mexican, but your name is Japanese, but you look White. Half maybe? Can you say something in Spanish then? Prove it, prove it. Can you truly be Mexican if you don't speak Spanish? So you're not Mexican then.*

As Mikayla reported, her *testimonio* "had to do with my intersection between being a White-passing Mexican American and my Spanish-speaking abilities." In the interview she shared her frustration and around other people's inability to hold and accept her intersections. She recast this denial and questioning as a problem of others. She said:

> But being Mexican or looking White, people can't seem to grasp the fact that those two identities can coexist. As if Mexicans can't be light skinned or as if Mexicans can't speak Spanish, right?

Mikayla recognized that the problem lies with others and their insertion and attempts to categorize and label. She continued by affirming:

> We come in all shapes and colors, and we speak different languages … So it's just very interesting how these different intersectional identities can create … they seem to create more confusion for other people who are trying to figure things out, that sometimes just really aren't their business, and really aren't their stories to tell.

In that quote Mikayla also shared a clear message of ownership over her counterstory. Moreover, this experience with *testimonios* kept her mindful about the intersectionality of her colleagues and students. In regards to her colleagues she said, "I think it reminded me that my colleagues, they all come from diverse backgrounds where their identities intersect in ways that make them who they are." She brought this layer of mindfulness and activism about intersectionality into her classroom. She shared:

> I need to be mindful that in my classroom … I need to be extra mindful to empathize, and just be cognizant of the fact that not everyone's experience is all the same when it comes to their identities intersecting.

Mikayla was creating spaces in her classroom where intersectionality was affirmed, valued, and included. I will share how she did this in theme area pertaining to pedagogical practices and *testimonios*. The colleagues, families, and students, including this researcher, who had the opportunity to listen to Mikayla share her *testimonio*, and her thoughtful reflections, heard a succinctly woven tapestry of unapologetic intersection, told with confidence and power.

In her *testimonio* Carla also recast her experience of immigration, the stress and confusion of navigating in between countries, languages, and cultures. Engaging in her *testimonio* was a way to share with colleagues, families, and students about her background immigrating from Columbia to California and the process of becoming bilingual. She brought to life the duality and complexity of her intersectionality when she wrote her *testimonio* in Spanish and in English:

> *I am from vibrant colors everywhere*
> *From Colombia and California*
> *I am from greeting others with hugs and kisses.*
> *From being a problem solver and flexible thinker.*
> *I am from tambores, gaitas y guitarras*
> *from tostones y tamales.*
> *I am from art, art everywhere because art heals and invigorates our souls*
> *From abrazos de abuela y sonrisas de mis estudiantes*
> *And that is where I am from*

This *testimonio* shared above was for colleagues in a "Where I Am From/I Am" poem style. We will read in the pedagogy and student theme how she elevated this style in the classroom. Carla also had shared *testimonios* with families that were counterstories in other genres.

In these, she shared about some of the challenges and experiences navigating between countries, languages, and cultures. She recalled:

> And also the experience of moving without your family. That was also especially hard because I didn't have anyone guiding me. I have to learn everything by myself. Doing all the immigration papers with a dictionary, trying to figure it out, what does this mean? Or making sure you fill out everything correctly. That was the process that takes a long time, especially when you come here as a fiancé and then you married, you have to prove that

> it's a real marriage. That is not for the papers. And so there, there are different stages until you become a citizen. There's a lot of paperwork involved.

Her *testimonios* offered an opportunity to express the challenge of immigrating without her family and the process toward citizenship. They tell a story of struggle and of perseverance. She also chose to share about becoming bilingual, and in doing so discussed the importance of perseverance and the challenge. She said:

> I feel becoming bilingual is hard. It doesn't happen overnight. It happens over many years of hard work, but once you have it, is a gift because now you have a key to different worlds and you can explore so many more things. You could watch a movie or read a book in a different language or communicate with people, different languages. But just getting there is the hard part. Most people will do college in 4 years or 6 when they have to do masters and other things. But for me, it took me 8 years because I had to learn the language and start from zero. And so that part, that was one of the parts that I shared.

As a bilingual teacher, for Carla, it was important to recognize the difficulty of the journey, and also to recognize the benefit and gift of bilingualism. The challenges of becoming bilingual intersected for Carla around her experience immigrating to California.

Carla also noted that her *testimonio* represents many aspects of her culture, and especially acknowledged the interconnectedness of her Latino culture. She beautifully illustrated the code switching between cultures when she shared:

> And the other thing I remember sharing it was about how the culture is so different, because Latino culture and American culture, they're very different in many aspects. They're more, American culture is more individualized. So they think more about themselves and is a little bit more egocentric. And even the way people greet is keeping your personal space and just waving and Latino cultures or especially Colombian is different. It's we don't see ourselves as one person, but as a group. So I don't see myself as Carla. I am a daughter, I am a sister. I am a teacher. I am a wife. So you always thinking about and how your actions affect others.

Whether she was sharing a counterstory or a poem, the colleagues, families and students, and this researcher, who had an opportunity to listen to Carla share her *testimonios* were presented with a rich, poetic, and heartfelt encapsulation of her intersectional identities.

Heather opened her *testimonio* with racialized intersectionality when she said, "How are you Mexican with a name like that?" and in her interview, she explained the purpose of beginning in that way:

> I come from a family where everyone's name can be pronounced in Spanish, except for mine, so oftentimes … And I don't look like the Mexican that everyone expects to be, darker complexion, or darker eyes. I don't look like what media or whatever portrays to be a Mexican woman, or girl. … When people are like, "Your name is XX, how are you Mexican with a name like that," and it's always, constant, I have to explain myself, explain who I am and where I come from. But really, that's who I am. And people didn't know that I was Mexican, and people would always say, "Then what are you? You look exotic," So it's kind of like, there I am again hiding who I am, because you get tired of people asking you questions … And I think I tucked it in because again, I was never confident because of people always asking …

Heather highlighted the intersection of race and language in her *testimonio* when she shared about her first name:

> I start with my first name. The common (English speaking) counterpart can say my name effortlessly, but my grandparents, who only speak Spanish, could never pronounce my name. And I talk about how I never tried to correct my grandparents, because they really understood who I was, and I didn't care. For me, they were just my people, and I didn't care what they called me. And my grandparents never questioned who I was. They knew me for me, and that was it. But then, I guess my name was always … Everyone else wanted to know more, they just couldn't take it and accept it.

With her grandparents, Heather felt understood and fully known. In schools, in contrast, her raciolinguistic intersectional identities were denied, and these experiences of denial and questioning are important to share. She powerfully concluded her *testimonio* with a recasting and ownership of her bilingualism and an homage to her ancestors who gave her Spanish:

> *But now every weekday morning, I walk into a classroom of bilingual linguistic geniuses. I find answers for the confusion I felt as a young girl, as I unapologetically unravel my tongue. Ya entiendo, I understand now. Maestra XX. Finally I have a name that I don't have to explain. A name my grandparents can pronounce effortlessly. And every day it's like I get to be by my grandparents' side again, XX. But for them, "XX." And now Maestra XX because of them. I am Mexican American, bilingual me. I am enough.*

Heather "unapologetically unravel[ed]" her tongue in her *testimonio* and in doing so, she affirmed her intersections, and centered her story of bilingualism as linguistic wealth for her colleagues, families, and students.

Theme 3: *Testionios* as Transformative Pedagogy

> Every time I deliver the testimonio it's kind of like the phoenix, like I get to pull that little girl out of hiding, and it feels really nice and healing.
>
> —Heather

It is no wonder, considering the innately personal intersectional identities shared and given the raciolinguistic critical consciousness described in Theme 2, that participating in both the telling and listening of *testimonios* can be an emotional and transformative experience. Participants shared how they felt as a *testimonialista* and as a listener. What was surprising to this researcher was not the variety of positive emotional responses, coupled with negative feelings of vulnerability, anger and uncertainty … but the intensity of the emotions. In this section I will explore the feelings participants expressed in relationship to the overall process and to both the act of telling and the act of listening.

Reciprocal Positive Regard

The positive associations participants described ranged from a general sense of comfort, to a surprisingly deep sense of regard, pride, and positivity. For example, Esme reported, "I think that it was evident in that space that everybody really valued having the moment to share. And I felt really comfortable with everyone that was there. And so I felt comfortable sharing." She also found the act of listening and telling rewarding. She shared, "And so it was really rewarding, just being able to hear their experience and then also being able to share a little bit about myself as well." Esme described the reciprocal nature of telling and listening as beneficial.

Esme's positive feelings were echoed by other participants, and at times, they were described in a more intense manner. When asked to fill in the prompt "I feel ____ after giving my *testimonio* to families," Heather responded with "fierce" and smiled. She expanded and added, "I feel seen, supported, and by a lot of families actually, I feel really loved." Similarly, when describing how it felt to tell her counterstory to a colleague, Heather reported a surprisingly intense positive feeling. She said, "Then it just kind of was like, wow. It was so nice, again, to know that this person came from the community at DHE. And also it was like, just seeing how she reacted made me feel really good." Both the act of telling itself and the response of others were validating and reinforcing.

Other participants also commented on both of these aspects related to telling. Mikayla described the feeling of being "truly understood" for the first time: "It was the first time I felt like someone truly understood because, yeah, it was like … it was astonishing." Here, too, Mikayla is surprised, "astonished" at the depth of her feelings. Upon thinking about how she felt after sharing about her English-only kindergarten experience with colleagues, Olivia reflected, "And so I think after having exposed myself in a *testimonio* that way, it felt really good and empowering." In some ways, Olivia surprised herself with what she was able to produce in her heartfelt *testimonio* and how wonderful it made her feel. She said:

> And it's incredible what you can write in 10 minutes when you're very focused and your heart is into what you're writing. It was just incredible to hear someone else's *testimonio* who had the chance, just like you write it in such a short amount of time. And then just sharing out, was like so incredible.

In this statement we get a preview into Olivia's experience as a listener as well.

Bravery

In addition to good, comfortable, and positive feelings, many participants described a feeling of bravery in the act of telling. Olivia, quite succinctly, said, "I felt brave. I felt brave."

Mikayla described the act of telling as brave when she said about the process, "It's a brave thing to do, I think, in a space," and described her own sharing as a "brave leap of faith." Mikayla continued in more detail:

> I remember my heart was beating a lot at the beginning, and it was beating maybe even faster at the end, like, "Oh, I shared that with everyone." Because I think there was part of me that, the workshop was a brave space and it was a safe space, but I think it was more a brave space because you can … in the space itself, it's safe, but you still have to be brave. And what comes out after you leave the safe space might not always be safe.

What Mikayla shared in this interview is a recognition that the safety created in the space where participants were sharing might not extend to outside of the space. This to me, deepens the understanding of how much bravery was required on her end. In other words, Mikayla recognized the risk associated with her unapologetic telling and chose to continue. In addition, Mikayla pointed out that her initial sharing in a breakout room with one colleague gave her courage to share with the larger whole group of listeners. She said:

> And from there, it became like, it was like the icebreaker to feeling like, do I want to share this with the whole group? And so I shared it with whoever was in the group … I felt brave enough to share mine with the whole group!

Leticia, as well, noticed that she felt braver and less nervous upon the retelling of her story in this interview process with the known researcher, despite knowing it would be shared in the published findings. She said, "I feel less nervous because, one, I've already heard myself and know what to change. I had a little bit more time to prepare it and because it's just you here. Even though it's going to be shared out." Although after the first time she shared her *testimonio* in the bilingual convening she wondered afterwards about the importance or impact of the counterstory, upon reflection she recognized how important it was to share. This kind of awakening to the experience upon reflection was another common feeling.

Transformation

Several participants described feelings of healing, awakening, or transformation in their emotional processing. As described, Leticia reported seeing more clearly the power in her story. She shared:

> The more I thought about it, especially going back to it now for this interview, I was like, "No, I think it is important. Because I think there's probably others out there that have had my experiences who have had to attend school in both places and feel that, like you said, having to make a choice, what do you identify with? Who are you?"

Leticia had begun the process of recasting her experience not as a personal failure (being a show-off) but as one of a system forcing her to choose between her identities and to hide one or the other.

Heather also described a transformation each time she delivered a *testimonio* and in the interview during reflection, she labeled this transformation as that of a phoenix rising from the ashes. She said:

> After I do it I feel great. It's kind of like the rebirth of the phoenix, where it's like all these years everything just felt like it was against you, and it's like, "Wow, this is me now." And you're doing it with people who are, like I said, we're all teachers now, and this is our professional setting. It's like, this is who we are, and we're going with it.

Heather was describing a process of healing, of rebirth from her counterstory, and that felt good. She expanded to say:

> It feels good. I mean it always feels good. I think every time I deliver the *testimonio* it's kind of like, like I said, the phoenix, like I get to pull that little girl out of hiding, and it feels really nice and healing.

As reported in the theme of critical consciousness, several participants recast harmful raciolinguistic experiences as systemic failures; this seems especially critical because in many instances the personal experiences happened in childhood. The interview was an opportunity to go back figuratively and to tell their inner child the message of recasting.

Two participants described awakening to feelings of anger toward the experience. Upon reflecting about how others did not accept her raciolinguistic intersectional identities, Mikayla

described a feeling of getting fired up, recognizing what they were doing was unacceptable; it was identity oppression. She said, "I think if anything, every time I think about it more intentionally, it kinda riles me up a little bit. It's like, no, I want to raise my fist up to the air or something." Olivia also uncovered feelings of anger toward what happened, as was described in Theme 3, critical consciousness. She said, "… It made me feel angry. It made me feel a bit angry at the fact that what happened to me that day that I remember that still brings negative feelings." Despite these uncomfortable and hard feelings, Olivia felt "better" after having shared her *testimonio* in the interview process. She said:

> Better. I think having shared it twice. When I shared it the first time I had to stop. I literally had to stop midway and I almost told my partner that I couldn't go on. It was really hard. When I share Back to School Night, it's brief, it's a minute or two. It's just a little peek into that whole experience. But diving deep into it like I have just now, even though it wasn't that long, I think the second time around, this time around, it's better. It's allowing me to process. It's allowing me to forgive. It's becoming better.

As she continued to share her counterstory in different circles she noticed a feeling of forgiveness as well.

Anger was not the only hard emotion expressed. Some participants felt uncomfortable, vulnerable, or uncertain about sharing. Carla addressed this when describing how it felt to give a *testimonio* in a workshop space with some teachers she did not know, when she said, "Well, in the convening, it was a little bit awkward because there were some strangers there. So, you always feel vulnerable when you are sharing personal information." As I will share in the theme on connections with colleagues, her comfort level changed around her grade-level colleagues.

Esme recognized the "heaviness" of sharing her counterstory. She did not share her story to elicit pity, nor did she want instances of oppression and hard experiences to "define" her. She reported:

> One of the things that I have such a hard time with when talking about my *testimonio* is not making it like a pity story. Like, I don't want the experiences that happen to me to

> define me. I'd rather like where I am now and the things that I want to continue to do to have a bigger emphasis. But sometimes when sharing like the weight of some of the things that I have gone through just feel like a lot heavier and it makes it hard to share at times.

Despite this heaviness, Esme found the positive reactions families and students had to her *testimonios* to be validating when she said, "I think for me, it reminds me that the work that I do is valued." It seemed that for Esme, the trade-off for experiencing the heaviness of the story comes in the reaction and reception of her colleagues, families, and students.

Listener experience.

In addition to giving their *testimonios*, participants had an opportunity to listen to the counterstories of others. I will describe the interconnection this creates in an upcoming theme; what I will relate in this section are the feelings associated with the listening experience. The participants described feelings of empathy, pride, affirmation, and a generalized deep feeling of "knowing" the other person, which in turn brought a feeling of closeness. These feelings exist in the space of "and," meaning that they are connected, interdependent, and related, not singular categories. For this reason, I will report on them as they flowed together and connected from the participants themselves.

First, listeners reported an ability as a result of listening to empathize with another person's feelings and/or experiences. This empathy built connection, and it also was a bridge to feelings of pride for colleagues. When talking about how it felt to listen to her colleague Heather states, "I felt sad. But I think it was just kind of empathetic. But then I was also really proud of them, just that they got it out." Heather wasn't the only participant to describe a feeling of pride when given the opportunity to listen and connect to the experience of others. Mikayla shared her sense of pride in listening to two of her colleagues:

> I just remember XX's and XX's. But hearing both of theirs, I felt like, "I'm glad you're here. You both endured experiences that have led you to who you are today. And I'm

> happy for you. I'm proud of you. I'm glad to be your colleague." There was a sense of … I felt proud. It wasn't my testimonio, but I felt proud for them just because, they're both amazing people, and I want the best for them. And so it was nice to hear what … how their experiences have shaped them to be who they are today.

Mikayla's sense of pride and happiness in knowing her colleagues and their experiences was deepened by listening to their counterstories. Leticia also felt a sense of empathy and understanding for her colleagues. In relating her reaction, Leticia said:

> I did not know about that experience for her. But I identified with some parts of her testimonio. And others, I didn't go through that experience, but I could almost put myself in her shoes and feel some of these things that she was feeling. I had empathy for her, for what she had to share.

Leticia may not have had the exact same experience, but listening gave her a feeling of relating, a feeling of empathy. Carla also was able to connect with her colleagues' story and make a bridge to her own experiences. She said:

> I like it. I like to listen to other people's stories, and hearing how they have similar, but also in different background experiences. I remember one of the teachers …she was talking about how, when she was growing up, because she was the one who was learning English at school. So, she had to translate for her parents and also do many calls of things that they have to do. So she became the official translator, even though she was a little kid. And so I felt connected that I was also a translator, not for others, but for myself …

Carla saw a connection between the childhood experience of translating and her own adult immigrant experience having to "translate" for herself. The counterstories shared bring the listener closer to the teller by building empathy and understanding.

In addition to and different from empathy, several participants described a very intense and deep sense of closeness, an understanding or knowing the other person through listening. In some cases, this closeness occurred without reciprocal talking, just in the act of listening. Mikayla shared, "I remember feeling … I was like, 'Oh, I didn't know these things about XX.' And it made me feel closer to her without talking to her, if that makes sense." Leticia also related

a sense of closeness without the need to speak in return when she described how a whole conference of bilingual teachers went from strangers to knowers via *testimonios*. She said:

> I feel like when we were at the convening, a lot of us … even if we didn't say it, we probably identify with each other and that made connections, even though they weren't spoken. But now we felt more connected to those people that when we got there were strangers.

What Leticia described is the power of listening to a counterstory, to the centering of a historically marginalized story. Olivia as well captured the special and sacred nature of being a witness to another person's counterstory when she described her feelings when listening:

> I felt … What's that word? Privileged. I felt privileged because it was just a one-on-one. I felt privileged because what I heard, I knew that no one else in our group had heard or would hear unless we attended something similar in the near future. So what my partner shared with me was very personal too, and very, very sentimental, right? Something very special to her. So I felt very privileged having the opportunity to have listened to her.

This sacred, privileged space that Olivia described is not often made in education. Her colleague Esme built on why it was important to open these sacred spaces to bilingual teachers when she shared:

> I think it's such a neat way to learn about what experiences also helped mold the people that surround us. Like the colleague that had shared, I always see them as really happy with so much energy and just being able to learn more about what makes them them, what brings them joy. And also the things that don't bring them joy is also something that's so important. And isn't something that is valued in our context necessarily. I feel like, especially in education, there's such a culture to be positive all the time, but those parts and experiences that result in a lot of pain and required healing are also important to share.

Esme recognized and named the value of making space for pain, so that there can be space for healing. Again, this is evidence of her belief as shared earlier that education had the power to transform and to be a healing place. Administrators and leaders, those who make decisions about what professional learning is allowed and happens in schools, would be wise to listen to Esme. Before I arrive at the implications of these themes and findings, however, it is important to share the impacts *testimonios* had on the participants' interaction with the learning community.

Theme 4: *Testimonios* Influence Interactions With the School Community: "You're Able to Not Assume but Wonder"

> Because once you dive deep into your own testimonio, you're able to not assume but wonder, right? About the testimonios of others. And I think that's very, very powerful.
>
> —Olivia

As I shared in the first theme, the bilingual teachers in this study connected deeply to the idea that the DHE feels like "home" and a "family." In this theme, I explore how the practice of *testimonios* is having a profound impact on and is contributing to that overall sense of community and family at DHE. In general, the use of *testimonios* has created a tighter sense of overall community and belonging; as Olivia shared, "Community has become something more important than it was before." Between colleagues, the teachers reported improvements in working relationships that were more open and honest and carried less assumptions and judgment. For example, Leticia said, "Just being conscious of people's experiences and not judge, not make assumptions," when speaking about the impact of a colleague-engaged *testimonio* workshop. They also described relationships with each other that were more trusting, comfortable, and safe. With families, teachers described the practice as strengthening and improving relationships by making them closer, more honest, and with a deeper sense of mutual appreciation. Olivia described the connection this way: "I feel a lot closer to families … knowing that I've shared something with them, such as a *testimonio*." Teachers recognized that families had *testimonios* as well, as Carla shared: "We get to know them a little bit better, not just this is the mom or the dad of whoever, this is a person with their own stories and their background." The family partnerships that ensued from the act of sharing and receiving *testimonios* were profound, with significant potential to impact the climate and culture of the school.

Con Colegas.

Tighter Sense of Community: Closeness and Belonging. In general participants reported an overall sense of community, a closeness and belonging through the practice of *testimonios*. Olivia described a process through *testimonio* by which she became and felt like she was a part of the community. She said:

> It's made me see community as something more important than it was. I don't know how to explain that. But community has become something more important than it was before. Before my first year … I don't live here. It's not really my community. I come here to work, but after having the *testimonios* workshops and telling them a little bit about myself every year, it's changed that whole perspective.

That Olivia was one of the more veteran teachers speaks to the weight of this sentiment. This idea of overall improved sense of connection, of closeness, was shared by other participants. Carla said, "Well, it made me feel I'm not alone, that's a common experience. It makes you feel closer to the person too, because you relate to them." Mikayla described the improvement to the overall community when she said, "We're better together when we're able to share those experiences, because then we understand where each other's coming from." Mikayla was sharing that there was an improved sense of community because of an understanding of positionality and experience of others.

More Open, Honest; Less Assumptions and Judgment. Other participants expanded upon and echoed Mikayla's idea that learning about the positionality of others made relationships in the community more open and honest and less judgmental. Carla described the impact on her grade level team when she shared:

> And it also has also changed … That part and also how I get along with my team grade level, because we are very honest about how we feel and we are also very respectful of our differences. So I feel more comfortable sharing in that group, showing my personality and being honest, but also respecting theirs.

In addition to more honesty and respect, Carla described a shift in her collaboration and teamwork. She said:

> But it's also when we are planning those ideas, it doesn't have to be my way all the time. I have to listen to others and think, "Oh, that's a great idea." And you know, we help each other. We collaborate. That's the whole point of when we have our collaboration time too, to share ideas and build upon those ideas.

Carla was more open to the ideas of others, and she spoke with great appreciation, respect, and commitment to her grade-level colleagues.

This honesty, respect, and openness also comes from a realization that there are counterstories that are untold and participants want to be less judgmental and more aware of the untold story. Leticia, for example, carried away from the experience a deeper awareness of the untold counterstory that led to fewer assumptions and less judgment. When talking about returning from her bilingual convening experience to the DHE community, she said:

> And going back to my school, I feel like there's probably a lot of people here that I share similar experiences with. And we might eventually get an opportunity to share them, but if not, at least we come to them with an awareness that we can expect maybe for them to have had similar experiences. Just being conscious of people's experiences and not judge, not make assumptions.

Carla also was more conscious of the untold counterstory in her community, and this led to engaging with the community in a more respectful, less judgmental manner. She said:

> Being respectful because sometimes we see people, but we don't know the story behind them. And sometimes we can judge and not understand how a person reacts or says something, but we don't understand the whole story. We don't see the whole picture to understand what's going on, or why is the person choosing to say, or do certain things. So that helped me to be a little bit more open-minded and respectful and less judgy.

Both Carla and Leticia tapped into the same sentiment Olivia described in the highlighted quote that opened this theme area: by engaging in *testimonios* teachers start to wonder about the counterstory of others, and in doing so, they make fewer assumptions and more space for curiosity and openness.

More Trust, Safety, and Connection. Participants also described an added sense of trust, safety, and caretaking when describing how *testimonios* had impacted their interactions

within the DHE community. Heather explained how the sense of trust extended to the community when she said:

> When I've listened to colleagues, it's kind of like all of a sudden now, when I see those colleagues on the playground or in the hallway, it's just another added layer of trust. Or even, I've got you, you've got me. Don't know how to explain that, but when you listen to what these people have to say, it's kind of like, wow. And it's really nice, especially at DHE. Just because I feel like, when we're all together and when we're in it, we're just in it for the kids.

This trust is built by a mutual vulnerability and willingness to share personal experiences—hard, sometimes painful experiences—that are representative of intersectional identities. Sharing in this way changes the relationship, as Heather continued to explain:

> I think with colleagues it was really kind of like letting my guard down, and just kind of showing them another side of me. Because they all see me for someone who's super cheerful and happy, but at the same time it was kind of like, this is who I am, and this is why I'm here, and why I'm working alongside of you. It's kind of like … we're in it together. I'm here for you, I'm here with you, kind of being like an ally I guess … it's really like, we check in on one another now.

Heather was commenting on the power of sharing a more full, complex portrait of herself with colleagues. She was not alone in thinking that the sharing via *testimonio* profoundly changed her relationship with colleagues. Olivia shared a similar experience:

> It was like with my partner. I feel a lot closer to her after knowing that she listened to me with something so personal and I did the same with her. After having that experience, it just changes you, it changes your relationship with that person. You know something of them that very little people know, right? Or you know something so special of that person.

Olivia painted a picture of close connection that is created in knowing the counterstory.

Because of this connection, the impact on relationships, the teachers at DHE who participated in this study saw the value in having more opportunities to share their *testimonio*. As Leticia explained:

> It's already a pretty close community, but we also have new staff that's coming … staff comes and goes and having something like this, maybe every year, it would be nice for us to be able to learn more about those that are just coming. And for those that are just

> coming to find connections with people who are already there, just to make that community tighter.

Testimonios had the potential to make the colleague community even tighter than it already was, in her opinion, and could act as a vehicle to bring new staff into the fold, to build their connections.

Con Familias

In addition to the impact on interactions and relationships between colleagues, there emerged evidence that the practice of *testimonios* also has an impact on the interactions and relationships between teachers and families. Teachers described the practice as strengthening and improving relationships with families, making them closer, more honest, and with a deeper sense of mutual appreciation and connection. And although the teachers described relationship benefits across racial/ethnic and linguistic groups of families, the teachers in this study described a deeply rewarding, *mutual* connection with bilingual Spanish/English and monolingual Spanish families who identified as Latino/a/x that came from a centering and telling of their raciolinguistic counterstory.

First, in broader terms, teachers described an overall improvement in relationships and closeness with families. Heather saw the use of *testimonios* "as just another avenue of relationship building for how we connect with our families." Olivia expanded on this concept when she shared how *testimonios* left her feeling closer to families and how they changed the depth of conversations she has with families:

> I feel a lot closer to families. I think that knowing that I've shared something with them, such as a testimonio, it was like with my partner. … Every year that I share something with my families, mini testimonios, I feel so much closer to them. And we're able, when we do have talks to go deep into things that we probably wouldn't touch on a parent–teacher conference, right?

For Leticia, engaging in *testimonios* also changed the way she interpreted what families shared with her during conferences and family interviews. She said:

> And it makes you value when these families go into telling these little stories sometimes about them. And you value it because it's their *testimonio*, they're telling you about experiences. And you don't just hear it as an, oh little story they're telling you. You see it as something significant, it could be culturally, socially, emotionally for them. And think it opened my eyes to pay attention to those aspects of anyone in our school, no matter the background of their stories.

Leticia was listening and interpreting moments of storytelling differently, hearing the stories as important and significant. She seemed to be more attuned to counterstory as it presented. Carla appreciated that *testimonios* helped her get to know families better and to see them as people with their own lived experiences, not just as the parent of one of her students. She said:

> We get to know them a little bit better, not just this is the mom or the dad of whoever, this is a person with their own stories and their background. And maybe we have similar experiences that it makes us feel more connected.

Carla saw this opportunity for connection to be mutual when she said "makes *us* feel more connected" (emphasis added), which is an interesting component even when the storytelling could be one directional. Olivia also saw the families via *testimonio* in a different way, looking for deeper connections. She said:

> Ever since I began doing the testimonios with SEAL, I think I've been able to see families and individuals in those families in a very different way. Not necessarily just on the surface, but trying to find a deeper connection with them.

Olivia connected her practice of using *testimonios* as a method to see her families and look for meaningful moments to join.

Participants also viewed *testimonios* as an opportunity to be real, congruent, and genuine with families so that they could establish values and purpose, or, as Esme said:

> I think Back to School Night is like a great opportunity to kind of set the foundation of like, okay, this is who I am. So if you have anything to say, you can say it right now at the beginning of the year. … Like they already knew what teacher their child got at the beginning. I felt sharing with parents being second generation Mexican growing up in the

> United States, viewing education as something that is transformative, being a queer teacher. And so I think all of this is really important because if anything comes up, they at least have some knowledge of how I might approach the problem.

Esme wanted families to know how she might approach situations that come up in the classroom and appreciated the opportunity to set a tone in the start of the year with her full self, "who I am." Heather also used *testimonios* at Back to School Night with families to set a tone. She said:

> So to give a testimonio to these families is kind of like, I need you to see that this is what I am, and if we're going to support our children, whoever they are, I need you to know that this is me. I'm not changing. But I need you to know why I'm here at DHE, especially. And pretty much, why I'm doing what I'm doing.

During Back to School Night, Heather chose to share about her race and ethnicity with families in this way:

> I'll focus on Back to School Night. I touch a little bit on my own experience and feelings in being a Mexican American girl in school, and how I just never felt enough, or never felt seen, and just really working through the process of what I've experienced.

Heather wanted to share her experience in English-only schools to connect with families, but more, to offer up a true version of herself, of her race and culture, and how she viewed the purpose of her work as a bilingual teacher. For both Heather and Esme, there was a desire to join, to be genuine yet also to be upfront about their values and their intersectional identities. From the start (Back to School Night is the second week of school), they were making an unapologetic centering of their intersectional identities.

Olivia as well appreciated the venue of Back to School Night to quickly and powerfully connect on an emotional level with her families. When describing families' reactions to her counterstorytelling of her English-only kindergarten experience, she said:

> And I've seen families cry alongside myself, because it's a real story that I share because I don't want it repeated. And I let them know that. "I went through this so your child wouldn't." And so that just grabs hold of all of us, including myself. When I speak at those events that I just, when I've seen people come up to their eye, (gestures to wipe away tears) I know that they're feeling something beyond just their normal feelings.

Olivia eloquently described the moment of telling and the resulting interactions with families as taking a hold, reciprocally, with an intensity of emotion. On the impacts of these moments with families, she described a congruency and a humanizing with Latino Spanish-speaking parents. She reflected:

> Yeah. I think it adds … It humanizes us, right? I feel that here in DHE, the population that we have, most parents didn't go to college, right? At least the Spanish speaking. And with that, I feel like they glorify teachers. "Oh, I could never talk to a teacher because she or he went to college and got their degree and the hierarchy." Although you don't see it, I've lived it, my parents, right?

In this quote, Olivia was referring to the idea that parents might not "see" on her that she was a child of migrant workers, but that in being vulnerable and sharing her background, she was hoping to break down barriers and build connections.

Raciolinguistic Affinities and White Witnessing. Participants acknowledged and expressed different purposes, comfort levels, and connections with families along racial/ethnic and linguistic lines. This is an important finding because it has implications with the ability of *testimonios* to recognize and build the presence of people of color's cultural wealths into the classroom, to counter racist deficit lens narratives, and to build allyship. As Heather described, there was profound sense of purpose and meaning when a Latino family responded positively to her counterstory:

> And like I said before, I think the use of the testimonio really helps me connect to my families, especially the Latino community. Just because every time I've done it, the feedback is always really positive. And a lot of parents will come and tell me, especially my White families, will say, "Thank you for sharing." And it's really heartfelt, and it's a really sincere thank you. But when it's a Latino family, like most recently a family took the time to say … They told me that, number 1, they were really thankful that I shared. But they said, "We really think our daughter sees herself in you." And it was kind of just like, oh my gosh.

The opportunity to have Latino families express how representation matters and how Heather contributes to their child's development was precious and had implications on how she saw her value and purpose as a teacher.

Heather also expressed an affinity and ease of connection with Latino families and families of color in general. She said:

> I think that it's a lot easier for me to work with families of color and also families of color who also know a little bit about what my struggles were like and can empathize with it. … But definitely with the Latino families, I feel like I can understand parts of who they are, and they can understand parts of who I am. As soon as I say, oh, my parents were immigrants. I'm second generation.

Her ability to share her family history, culture, and race/ethnicity helped her feel understood by and connect to Latino families. Olivia also expressed a meaningful connection especially with Latino families. She remembers two similar interactions, although a year apart:

> The two (Latino) families that I remember coming up to me, it was a three-generational family that just came up to me. It was grandma, mom, and the child. And the grandma, she had tears in her eyes and she's like, "I'm so happy that you're my child's teacher." She said, "What you just said just made me feel like you will understand my grandson. You will be able to support him in every which way you can and you will." And then another Latino family … The same. A different year. Yeah. And they came up to me, it was mom. And then she's like, I am so happy and cannot wait for this year to just roll because I know that my child is where he needs to be.

These Latino families were expressing to Olivia a sense of belonging, joy, and safety after listening to her *testimonio*. Considering that she shared a shortened version, approximately 3 minutes long, this is a profound connection and response that was well worth the time.

Theme 5: Impacts on Pedagogy and Student Connection: "That's What Makes It Beautiful."

> And that's what makes it beautiful. That we're all, all unique. And we're just here sharing who you are, through the poem.
>
> —Carla

For many of the participants the engagement with *testimonios* has shaped their interaction with students and pedagogy. Teachers notice the value add that counterstorytelling has on connections and relationships. For example, Leticia frequently used her counterstorytelling to make connections with students. She recognized her purposefulness in sharing when she said, "I constantly try to, when I can, make those little connections with students through sharing my experiences." Storytelling and sharing her experiences was a purposeful choice. Teachers also had a deeper realization in this process that students were also capable of doing identity work, that this work was important, and that it needed intentionality. Mikayla shared, "My students linguistically were able to express experiences and identities, even at the age of 7," in discussing her realization that students were capable. This means that teachers in turn were being more intentional and purposeful in making space in their pedagogy to utilize practices that affirmed children's languages, cultures, and many identities. Carla, for example, purposefully incorporated an additional set of "I Am" poems with her first-grade students midway through the year. As will be discussed, multiple DHE teachers were engaging in this intentional identity-affirming pedagogy.

Connection With Students: "… A Reminder of How Healing School Has the Opportunity to Be."

Some teachers used their *testimonio* experience as a way to influence their engagement with students, and it gave them a deeper understanding of what children in their classes might be experiencing. For Esme, her *testimonios* reflected many of her intersectional identities and she was purposeful and thoughtful about which counterstory and when to share depending on the audience. Esme shared three key intersectional identities for her: being second-generation Mexican growing up in the United States, her instructional equity stance of school having the

potential to be transformative, and her queer identity. With students, Esme saw counterstorytelling as an opportunity to disrupt racism, linguicism, homophobia, and classism. To do so, she shared experiences from a similar age to her students about her race/ethnicity, languages, and growing up in her family. She said:

> So at the beginning of this year, I was really open with sharing with students part of my life. There's been some comments by students joking about like, oh, like you're a hobo. You're homeless. And so I'm just trying to make them like really aware, like that's language that we don't joke about. And for me growing up when I was in fifth grade, my mom in order to get her residency, she needed to leave the States for a year. And so this age that my students are at right now was an age where like I didn't have my mom and I was with my dad and there was a lot going on at home and it was really hard for me. And I explained to my students that my dad's the kind of person that believes in like very stereotypical machismo things where like women aren't supposed to get an education.

Esme had also taken to storytelling one-on-one with students to help them feel seen, heard, and validated in their identities. For this reason, she had shared her queer identity:

> And so at the beginning of last year I had a student share with me that she was bisexual and I felt comfortable also sharing with her. At first, I had to ask my partner teacher, "Wait, is it okay for me to share this at school? Like, what is the school culture like?" She's like, no, yeah, we have staff at this school that's also a part of the LGBTQ community. And so then I was like, "All right." And I shared with the student and just like the smile on their face over Zoom was so rewarding. They were just like, "Oh my gosh, I didn't know adults are LGBTQ too." And it was really interesting for them to be so proud of their identity, but not realize that adults also hold these identities.

Esme noticed that her *testimonios* had impacted students beyond the classroom. In discussing how her students respond to her counterstories, she said:

> And so when it comes to responding, they're really understanding. And I think that's where the parent–teacher conferences were really nice because they're also responding really positively at home by sharing it with their families too. So it's not just a story that gets told once, it has its lingering effects outside of school too.

Esme expanded on the feedback she received at a parent–teacher conference in relation to her counterstorytelling and her student's connections. She recalled that "one of the parents shared that her daughter would go home and say how proud she was of me. And it's a student that I

didn't feel like I was reaching." Counterstorytelling was a method to build relationship and community with students, especially when they were at an age of preadolescence.

Esme wrote a *testimonio* she wanted to share for this study and sent it to the researcher via email. In it, she shared her identity as an agent of transformation, reminding students that they were "capable, loved, and matter," as she wrote in this excerpt:

> *During lunch, I sat on the grass with my student.They didn't talk, but I already know what's going on at home. All I ask is for one word to describe how they're feeling. "Mad," they respond. At that age, I was mad too. I expressed it differently but the feeling was similar.*
>
> *I let them know I've felt that way too. I tell them about my dad who would call me words I wasn't allowed to say. I tell them about my mom who had to take care of herself first at times. Sometimes my parents didn't know how to or weren't able to express their love for me. In these moments, I was never alone. Bad things are inevitable but so many people kind people come in and out of our lives.*
>
> *I hope before leaving for junior high they remember: even in our hardest of moments, we can't push away people, the people who care about us.*

Those who had the opportunity to connect with Esme around any one of her counterstories witnessed a profound complexity of love, strength, and paying it forward for her students. Her coutnerstorytelling and transformational stance represent the kind of connection *testimonios* can support between teachers and students.

Students Are Capable

By engaging in their own use of *testimonios*, teachers also reflected on identity related work with students. They reported clarity around students' abilities, even in the early grades of elementary school, to engage in identity related content and practices. Mikayla reflected in her interview that after engaging in the *testimonios* workshop, she noticed student identity work differently. In particular, what she realized is that her 7- to 8-year-old students were capable of expressing their intersectional identities, whether she taught it explicitly or not. She said:

> Actually, at this point, they were all 7, talking about, "I am from immigrant parents who moved to the United States to be able to let me go to school." And so this ties into the *testimonios* where I realized who was after the fact, that some of my students linguistically were able to express experiences and identities, even at the age of 7, before I was even explicitly teaching them or giving them an assignment … knowingly giving them assignment, expecting a particular type of outcome.

She continued to express her interest in continuing the work with students, to intentionally build community. She added:

> But second graders were able to do this work. I'd be curious to see where I could take this kind of concept, now that I'm more aware, now that I have more ideas, I have more experience. How I could do this with my students later on this year, or even at the beginning of next year, to kick off as a classroom community, who do we have in our classroom?

Mikayla was making plans based on her experience with *testimonios* as a pedagogical practice to incorporate this reflection. Mikayla saw benefits in building classroom community but also in the process of self-reflection. She summarized her realization about students being capable when she said, "So that's how it made me realize that my students at 7 years old, now, most of them are 8 at this point, but they are capable of putting together *testimonios*." If she had not engaged in the workshop and had her own experience, she might not have had as much confidence to move into this work with students.

Heather shared an experience where she delivered her *testimonio* to a group of seventh- and eighth-grade students because they were doing a unit on identity and intersectionality. She was invited to come and share her *testimonio*. She reported that "it was really nice because there was at least a quarter of the class who were some students who had been at DHE." After she delivered, the students were eager to write their own. She recalled the counterstory of one of the students:

> There was another student who, he wrote about the Black Lives Matter movement, and he was like, "It's not okay for people to treat me differently because I'm Black." And it was just really cool to see these kids, that they were all sharing. And as a whole, just a feeling in the classroom. You would think talking about a heavy topic, I guess, for lack of better

> words, it could be hard, but also these kids, they were just ready and willing to listen to each other. And they all cheered for each other after they would listen.

Despite the heaviness of the topic, Heather noticed how students were willing to listen, and that they supported each other in their counterstorytelling. Heather noted that in the room, as a result:

> There's trust, there's relationships being formed. Because just thinking about, back when I think about what they shared too, again, they go to school together every day, but you're not sharing these experiences all the time. It's not always something you talk about.

What she was noticing and commenting on was an opportunity to center the counterstory in a system of public education that did not regularly make space for these stories to be shared. She also noticed a type of allyship building, in reciprocal sharing an opportunity to build connections and more, to protect. She reflected:

> But then also, I think it's, these kids are gaining analysis. Like, this is my story, and then when they look at each other it's like okay, now you've trusted me enough to listen to what you've had to say; now in return they're saying, it's not okay for that to happen, and I'm going to fight for you.

The validation, support, and connection Heather watched transpire in a short period of time between these adolescents speaks to its potential application in other settings.

Intentional Opportunities and Space for Affirming Languages, Cultures, and Identities

Teachers in the larger DHE population employ a variety of pedagogical practices aimed at affirming children's languages, cultures, and identities via their SEAL training. Their experience with *testimonios* contributes and builds upon their understanding of these practices, and influences their increased use. Because they saw how *testimonios* had shaped their own counterstorytelling and transformation, and because they believed students were capable of this work, teachers were purposefully and intentionally incorporating these practices such as I Am poems, family interviews, culture wheels, self-portraits, and home-school family connections.

These are all examples of strategies and practices aimed at affirming children's and families' languages, cultures, and identities.

Esme for example, reflected on her use of poetry from the start of the year and considers how identity work should be ongoing. She said:

> We did I Am poems at the beginning of the year, but I think after some of the SEAL trainings that I've attended, I think it's really valuable to also do it at the end of the year. Because I think at the beginning, we're all starting to feel comfortable with each other … I think that they're still really nervous about sharing who they are. And especially in sixth grade, there's a lot of identity development that happens.

Esme recognized the value in ongoing work, and especially at the developmental stage of her students in the year prior to their transition to junior high school.

Leticia incorporated her experience from *testimonios* by being aware about what kind of pedagogical choices she was making and wondered if her experience would not have been so difficult if her teacher had incorporated more intersectional identity awareness and affirmation. She reflected:

> Well for one, my teacher at the time when I was so hesitant to share, I don't think he was aware of where my fear was coming from. So that makes me, as a teacher, more aware of not putting students in a position where they have to decide … they have to make these big choices or feel that way. And so that's one thing that it makes me consider as a teacher. And also wanting to speak more about identity, because if there had been maybe more conversations about identity in my classroom, maybe I wouldn't have felt so bad about using the language that was not well known there.

Leticia takes away from her *testimonio* reflection that she was more mindful about not cornering students into a choice, as was done with her. As she thought about why it was important to do this type of identity affirmation work with students, Leticia expanded by sharing:

> For one, I think we should always be working on discovering ourselves. Especially because we're never done because we're always changing. So even if we think we know ourselves, maybe something happened and that changed ourselves. And if they can start that journey when they're young and start self-reflecting and exploring, that's just great.

She continued by recognizing, much as in the earlier discussion, that her second-grade students could do more than educators believed that they could when it comes to reflection and exploring their intersectional identities. Leticia said:

> I love that we start this so early and that SEAL has taught us to incorporate all these strategies that help that journey for these students. And they can be pretty elaborate more than we think a second grader can be about their identities and their self-reflections, their self-awareness. But it also helps them make connections with their peers and build that classroom community.

Leticia saw value in intersectional identity exploration as a pedagogical choice because it builds classroom community, made peer connections, and increases self-awareness and self-reflection.

Carla, too, used the I Am poem form to encourage her students' counterstorytelling and to affirm their languages, cultures, and identities. She wrote her *testimonio* in a poem format as well. Carla was a first-grade teacher with 6- and 7-year-old children. She introduced them to I Am poems as a way to express their identities, and she encouraged them to think about who they were in a form that did not have preconceived pictures that might influence expression. She shared an example, and then encouraged students to really pause and think about who they were. She told students:

> This is my example, but you don't have to write the same because I am a different person. I have different experiences, and I like different things than you. And that's okay. You are different. And that's what makes it beautiful. That we're all, all unique. And we're just here sharing who you are, through the poem.

Carla expanded on why she used the poem as her format when she recalled:

> But with a poem is different because there are no pictures involved. It's more thinking about who you are, what you like, what is important for you? What do you want to share with others? You know, and what is meaningful? It's not just choosing the first random thing.

Carla was very aware and intentional about intersectional identity space in her classroom. She was mindful about how she spoke, and encouraged students to ask questions and to affirm others.

She told the story about how she welcomes families into her classroom and how she approaches inclusion and affirmation. Carla recalled:

> And then I have this boy, he comes from a Chinese–English background. Dad is from England and mom is Chinese. And also his mom is in a wheelchair. So, I'd be more mindful. You know, when we select the books, we select books that show diverse images. … And recently we had the Chinese New Year celebration. So she came in and did the presentation in the classroom. So I had to be very mindful that the kids will be respectful because they have questions before. So I make sure we had a discussion before. And then I said yeah, some people can walk and some cannot, but that doesn't mean that the person is less. It just means they move in a different way. And she has this cool chair and then she just press buttons and then she could move around like everybody else.

As a result of making space for intersectional identities, Carla learns what her students were thinking and feeling in ways that surprise her and give her insight. She shared one such instance as she was reading me her student's I Am poem:

> She's fully bilingual. She came in knowing the language in Spanish and English … She wrote: "Yo soy una artista, yo quiero que se termina COVID." Oh, that broke my heart when I heard it.

Over the course of her interview, Carla shared at least five student poems with this researcher. Her pride, her joy, her discovery about each child, the way she spoke about them, how deeply she knew how her students were … it was truly special. These experiences were possible because teachers like Carla were centering the counterstory regardless of the child's age, prioritizing identity development. Although I interviewed only six teachers for this project from DHE, I know she is in good company. The work they are doing at DHE is so important.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter I explored the five main emergent findings. First, teachers at DHE are deeply committed and connected to this specific school in the district for racial, linguistic, and cultural affinities, a raciolinguistic equity focus, and the sense of belonging, collaboration, and support among staff. Second, *testimonios* are a form of counterstorytelling where teachers share their racial, linguistic, cultural, and personal experiences as an opportunity to examine and

acknowledge their intersectional identities in a critically conscious manner. In doing so, there exists a sometimes painful yet powerful recognition of raciolinguistic harms and oppressions, and a recasting of those experiences not as personal failures but as system failures. Third, this process of telling, listening, and reflecting is emotional and transformative, often leaving participants surprised at the depth of emotion and the type of feelings. Fourth, *testimonios* influence the way teachers engage with and regard each other and families in the school community. And finally, fifth, *testimonios* also influence teacher pedagogical practices toward believing more strongly in student capacity to engage in this type of work, and their belief in the importance of affirming languages, cultures, and identities. In the upcoming chapter I will engage in a discussion of the findings as connected to the research questions, and report implications for policy and practices.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

Chapter 6 is organized into five parts: summary of the study, discussion of the findings, implications, recommendations, and a conclusion. In the summary I review the purpose of the study and research questions. In the discussion of the findings, I connect the findings with the specific research questions. In the implications and recommendations sections, I discuss policy and practice considerations. I conclude with a reflection of how this study impacted my work as a researcher, scholar, and practitioner in the field of dual language immersion and emergent bilingual education.

Summary of the Study

In this qualitative study I interviewed six bilingual Latina/o/x teachers from DHE to learn about how they engaged with the practice of *testimonios* and how this engagement shaped their voice and understanding of their own racial, linguistic, and other intersectional identities. I further explored how these understandings impacted their engagement with the larger school community, with colleagues, families, and students, and how it has informed their pedagogical choices. To arrive at five emerging themes, I conducted an inductive analysis (Saldaña, 2021) of the data from the interviews using open coding of the participants' transcribed responses. Where possible I used in vivo language (Saldaña, 2021) to code because I wanted to capture the essence and make meaning from the teacher's own discourse. I engaged in second and third rounds of coding, categorizing, and connecting themes together as they began to emerge. The themes captured the teachers' understanding of the practice of *testimonios* on their own racial, linguistic, and intersectional identities and how this understanding can be seen as critical consciousness. The themes also describe the transformative emotional impact of this engagement from the

perspective of teller and listener, and the resulting impact on teachers' engagement with the school community and their pedagogical practices.

Research Questions

The following two questions were developed to explore how the practice of *testimonios* at Dolores Huerta Elementary is affecting teachers' understanding of their own identities and, in turn, the impact on their interactions with the school community:

1. How does the use of *testimonios* as a pedagogical strategy connect bilingual teachers to their own racial, social, and linguistic counternarrative?
2. How does this understanding of identity and voice inform how they interact with the school community?

Discussion of Findings

The practice of *testimonios* at DHE has impacted bilingual teachers' view of their complex racial, linguistic, and cultural intersectional identities, and provided one avenue to express these identities and the related experiences that have shaped how they define, make sense of, and express who they are in relationship to themselves and to others. The practice of *testimonios* has also impacted the way they interact with each other, families, students, and the larger school community, inclusive of how they view current raciolinguistic oppressions and wealths. Five themes emerged from the data. They are (a) DHE has the culture of a village that feels like home; and *testimonios* as (b) critically conscious counterstories, (d) transformational, (e) connection to others, and (f) impactful on pedagogical practices. I will explore these theme area findings in relationship to the specific research questions.

RQ 1: How Does the Use of *Testimonios* as a Pedagogical Strategy Connect Bilingual Teachers to Their Own Racial, Social, and Linguistic Counternarrative?

The bilingual teachers at DHE in this study use *testimonios* as a method to connect to, explore, and reflect on their racial, linguistic, social, and other intersectional identity counternarratives. In particular, teachers explored their Latina/o/x race, ethnicity, their Spanish and English bilingualism, and many aspects of their culture, including experiences with immigration. Teachers also explored identities connecting their career as *maestra/o/x* to being social justice or equity work and to queer identities. Nearly all participants explored the intersectionality of their identities, the places where language, race, ethnicity, culture, etc. overlap and cross. These experiences were often painful to share because they centered their stories of racism, linguicism, and deficit lens and a White supremacy view of their Latina/o/x race, ethnicity, languages, and culture. These specific, poignant, intersectional experiences of oppression they shared, around which of their languages were "academic" and welcome in schooling, is similar to the findings of Flores and Rosa (2015) and is a nuanced and layered racially conscious view of their experiences.

Not only did these teachers via *testimonio* engage in an exploration of the structural marginalization and denial of their race, ethnicity, culture, and languages, they—most importantly—recast these experiences as system failures upon reflection, as researchers Blackmer Reyes and Curry Rodríguez (2012) argued. Teachers used critical consciousness to move experiences where their Spanish language was denied, not understood, and unwelcomed/rejected away from something being wrong, unfit, or out of place with themselves, to products and consequences of systemic failures from the English-only era and school systems' inability to welcome and affirm all of their languages, cultures, and identities. They identified

anti-immigrant sentiment, and instances of racism and linguicism, and exclusionary policies and laws, as reasons for their experiences, rather than seeing themselves as inadequate, confused, or lost (ni de aquí, ni de allá).

The teachers in this study also described instances where the intersections of their language, culture, and race were rejected by others by not fitting into a White dominant view of what it means to be Latina/o/x, Spanish-speaking or bilingual. Names, skin color, language swirl and crash against the dominant attempt to categorize, label, and "other." Yet teachers found "liberation," a "phoenix rising from the ashes," "healing," and anger in the recasting. They began to see these experiences as the failures of others to not grasp intersectionality. Critical race theorists have explained how race and racism present in K–12 education and what the negative impacts of unmitigated oppression and aggressions toward teachers of color (Kohli, 2017) can do to their mental and physical health. For this reason, it is critical that these teachers have an opportunity to name these racist experiences *in community with each other*, to validate and to hold them as system failures. And, when possible, to heal.

Some participants described raciolinguistic oppression around the registry of their Spanish language as perpetrated by schooling systems from elementary through teacher service credentialing and continued to identify these harms occurring in present-day DHE. This aligns with what many other researchers (Briceño et al., 2018; Ek et al., 2013; Flores & Rosa, 2015) who studied bilingual Spanish-speaking teacher candidate language ideologies found: that they were shaped by the English-only sociopolitical era and by schooling in this context of English hegemony. This shaping affects the beliefs and perceptions about their registry of language. In this study, it appears as feelings of low self-esteem around the level of proficiency of Spanish (one participant) and concerns about whether or not they should pursue bilingual authorization

(another participant). As authors Winstead & Wang (2017) proponed, we must pay special attention to understanding the hostilities and oppressions bilingual teachers have faced—such as the registry oppression described here—and how it shapes their bilingual identities so that they can engage in this work. In this study, *testimonios* were a method to understand their complex bilingual identities. Like the participants in Briceño et al.'s (2018) study, the bilingual Latina/o/x teachers in this study felt that they could not bring their Spanish to school and that their English was valued more in the system. *Testimonios*, however, gave these Latina/o/x teachers an ability to critically reflect on these messages and to reclaim and position their bilingualism as a source of pride.

At times this critical consciousness was surprising, and brought feelings of anger or an awakening; at other times, it was healing and empowering. Moreover, with this critical consciousness teachers expressed pride, value, and power in their languages, bilingualism, their race, ethnicities, and biculturalism. These linguistic and resistance community cultural wealths (Yosso, 2005) were named in the *testimonios* themselves and in the participants' reflection of their practice. Teachers felt "empowered," "liberated," and they "appreciate[d] and embrace[d]" and "found" their Spanish language and bilingualism as examples of linguistic wealth. Teachers recognized that their ability to recast and counter racist policies and practices, such as naming raciolinguistic harm in a staff meeting, was an example of resistance wealth. In recognition of these wealths, the acknowledging and naming of harms in community with others, the teachers in this study experienced what many researchers (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Sosa-Provencio et al., 2019) have posited about the transformational nature of *testimonios* on both the teller and listeners. This transformation was individual and collective, and has impacted their interactions with the school community, as I will explore in the discussion for RQ2.

RQ 2: How Does This Understanding of Identity and Voice Inform How They Interact With the School Community?

The Latina/o/x participants in this study described the various ways that *testimonios* have impacted their interactions with the school community with an overall sense of making the community tighter, safer, more honest, and improved. There were three specifically noticeable impacts. First was the improved relationships between teachers; second was the connection between teachers and families; and third was the influence on pedagogical practices that affirm students' languages, cultures, and identities.

The bilingual teachers in this study described a deep connection with each other and improved relationships. This impact on the school community contributes to a healthier, safer environment. The environment for Latina/o/x teachers matters, as discussed in the theoretical framework. As teachers of color, Latina/o/x teachers are often forced to leave part or many parts of their identities at the school building door in order to navigate the racist system (Kohli & Pizarro, 2020), and when teachers' racial and linguistic identities are devalued in this way, it can lead to an erosion of confidence and other mental and physical health challenges (Yosso et al., 2009). In this study, *testimonios* were an avenue for Latina/o/x teachers to bring their racial and linguistic identities into the school building, and the resulting impact on the community is positive and can combat some of the hostility these researchers described. The teachers described a deep connection, closeness, and incredible layers of trust with each other after engaging in *testimonios* together. This mutual positive regard made teachers feel safe, valued, and "truly seen" and contributed to better working conditions in terms of collaboration. Several teachers also expressed a less judgmental environment, where they had permission to wonder about the counterstories of their colleagues, both told and untold. Many described feeling a sense of honor

or privilege in connecting with their colleagues in this way, and they posited that the use of *testimonios* in the future would be a way to bring even more staff together, to bring new staff into the community, and to right harms that have occurred or might occur.

The Latina/o/x teachers in this study also described a profound level of emotional connection with families of color, particularly Latina/o/x families, via *testimonios*, similar to what authors Burciaga & Kohli (2018) described, with a strengthening of relationships by sharing their racial, linguistic, and other educational experiences. In particular, sharing their linguistic, racial, and cultural experiences with Latina/o/x families was a way to center and highlight linguistic and resistance capital, and to bring a critical consciousness to the raciolinguistic experiences and exclusionary policies that plagued and continue to be perpetrated in bilingual education. When Latina/o/x teachers share with families about their ancestors, their language, they are bringing the wealth of Spanish into the classroom and centering an asset based critically conscious counterstory of the contributions of Latina/o/x persons. When they share about their families' history of migrating for work, standing up front as a *maestra*, they are making the unseen seen, and telling a counterstory of resistance and navigation. And in return, when Latina/o/x families express their love, appreciation, and great sense of relief and safety for their children to the teachers, they are honoring the counterstory and connecting meaningfully to their own stories. The Latina/o/x families are taking risks and reciprocally sharing their counterstories with teachers, and the connection along racial, cultural, and linguistic lines is deeply felt. In this context of TWBI, these teachers via *testimonio* are bringing their community cultural wealth right through the building door, and moreover, they are holding up a critically conscious light to the counterstory and saying to families: this is who I am, this is who we are,

and we are important. Yosso (2005) encouraged teachers to bring these wealths forward, not only for representation but to sustain culture.

Finally, this study made evident the impact of *testimonios* on these teachers' pedagogical choices and interactions with students. As described in the framework, the adults in the TWBI system must engage and evaluate their own positionality, the ways they themselves have been marginalized and the ways in which they hold power, in order to engage children in this work (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017). Not only did the teachers in this study do their own work with *testimonios*, and engage in critical consciousness, they expanded their work with students. One used *testimonios* with junior high students to open a sacred counterstorytelling space. Several engaged in I Am poems with students as a way to arrive at a *testimonio*. And still others used their own counterstorytelling to relate to, connect, and support students. The Latina/o/x teachers in this study described an improved understanding of students'—including early elementary students'—capability to engage in identity-affirming work. They described their beliefs about the importance and power in self-reflection when they shared why students (and adults) should engage in affirmation of languages, cultures, and identities. They want their students of color, the majority of whom are Latina/o/x, to have positive bilingual, racial, and cultural identities. As Yosso (2006) reminded us in the third tenet of CRT, *the commitment to social justice*, schools are political places, and teaching in this way can be a political act. The bilingual Latina/o/x teachers in this study are transforming their classroom spaces by centering the counterstory of their students, and by intentionally making space for this pedagogy.

Implications for Policy and Practices

Understanding how Latina/o/x bilingual teachers via *testimonios* make meaning of their intersectional identities, and reflect critically on the racial, linguistic, and cultural oppressions

and harms they have experienced, has many social justice and equity implications for K–12 dual-immersion settings. I have grouped the equity and social justice implications into three main categories: implications for Latina/o/x teachers' well-being and retention; implications for the climate and culture of the school community; and implications for pedagogy and associated professional learning. As such, there are also implications for those who are responsible for training, preparing, and *sustaining* bilingual teachers in the field of dual immersion—district and site leadership, as well as teacher pre-service programs. I will begin with a discussion of the implications for the *maestra/o/xs* first, as they are the inspiration and purpose of this study.

Implications on Latina/o/x Teacher Well-Being and Retention

The implications this practice has for individual teachers' ability to experience a deeper sense of affirmation and pride in their own languages, races, cultures, and identities, which are directly connected to their daily work and requires accessing those pieces of themselves, are profound. Implications exist for Latina/o/x bilingual teachers at DHE related to their well-being, career efficacy, and retention. When they recast and consciously reflect on experiences of racism and linguicism, and view those experiences not as self-faults but as exclusionary policies, laws, and practices of the system, it leads to an improved sense of self, confidence, and bravery. The findings in this study reinforce what many researchers have recognized: that those participating in *testimonios* express a sense of healing and reparation in the process (Blackmer Reyes & Curry Rodríguez, 2012; El Ashmawi et al., 2018; Sosa-Provencio et al., 2019). The Latina/o/x teachers in this study described connecting and integrating their identities, especially around bilingualism and biculturalism, and critically reflecting on and recasting negative experiences as systems policy and practice issues. This critical consciousness and recasting left teachers feeling "astonished," "liberated," "brave," and more. They felt better about themselves and each other,

more connected to students and to families. As Latina/o/x teachers feel a connection to who they are in relation to their work in dual language, the implication is that they may experience more job efficacy and a greater likelihood to persist in their careers, as it is understood that White teachers persist in teaching careers over teachers of color (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). This improved sense of connection and well-being is tied to DHE as it was in the building and within the work of teaching, that they have these experiences of self-actualization and recasting. Several teachers in this study described a deep connection to the school as one of "family," a "village," and a place where they will "retire from." The implication, therefore, is that making space for the practice of *testimonios* is one opportunity to nurture the well-being of Latina/o/x teachers. It is critical. Teachers who do not feel seen, heard, or affirmed cannot authentically see, hear, and affirm students. If we really want racially and linguistically just dual language programs, we have to support the very adults whom we expect to create the climate of affirmation, inclusion, and equity. As I will discuss in the pedagogy and professional learning implications, I argue that this type of nurturing and growth is equally as important as developing the pedagogy of biliteracy for bilingual teachers.

Implications on the Climate and Culture of the School Community

The transformative implications of *testimonios* carry over from the individual to the learning community at DHE. Certainly, this practice has implications in the area of creating affirming, inclusive, and positive climates in the school community, and in teachers developing interpersonal relationships with each other and with their students and families. Many other studies have cited the transformative power in the act of the telling and listening (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Sosa-Provencio et al., 2019) and making space for the counterstory. As colleagues process stories with each other, or teachers share with students and families, there is an

opportunity to have a sacred shared vulnerability and strength. This not only improves relationships, when we hear, see, and know each other, but it has implications for equity and social justice by reclaiming air space and time for marginalized counterstories to be present in the classroom or school community. Colleagues in this study described healthier, safer, braver, and less judgmental working relationships. They reported on an improved sense of "wondering" about each other and where they were coming from. Dual language schools with poor staff interconnection and relationships, which can affect family/student climate, might consider using *testimonios* to build relationships, and extend curiosity to the untold counterstory. As the teachers in this study suggested, *testimonios* have implications as a method to welcome and bring in new staff to the community.

The practice of *testimonios* also has implications for community building and relationships from the perspective of families toward each other and teachers. The Latina/o/x families witnessing *testimonios,* as described by the teachers in this study, also experienced an emotional affirmation and shared with teachers how safe and secure they felt for their Latina/o/x children in their classrooms. White families experienced an opportunity to build allyship, to listen, and to make space for counterstories. Latina/o/x teachers described White teaching colleagues who made space for the counterstory and saw this practice as an opportunity to engage in allyship by listening. This relationship building and cross-cultural understanding is incredibly important for dual language, TWBI programs, which assert the pillar of cross-cultural understanding as a program goal. Moreover, should the field adopt the fourth pillar of critical consciousness, *testimonios* serve as a method to engage because they go beyond just sharing experiences to recasting them and bringing racial, linguistic, and cultural consciousness. The

practice of *testimonios*, therefore, has implications not only for the climate of the school, but for its ability to lean and "live" into its programmatic mission, vision, and goals.

Implications for Pedagogy and Associated Professional Learning

Because the implications related to affirming teachers' intersectional identities materialize in *testimonios*, it behooves those responsible for teacher preparation and for in-service teacher professional development and retention to understand and make considerations for how to nurture this practice and attend to bilingual Latina/o/x teacher intersectional identities. The implications of this study point toward continued professional learning at DHE that allows for critical consciousness around language, race, and culture for Latina/o/x bilingual pre-service and in-service teachers to be as important as development of the pedagogy of biliteracy. When a career requires the daily access and use of one's identities—identities that experience harm pervasively and persistently within the same system (Kohli & Pizarro, 2020)—administrators, faculty, and others responsible for teacher well-being must attend to those intersectional identities and the racist and linguicist experiences that teachers have navigated and continue to navigate. In other words, to ask bilingual teachers to use their heritage language without attending to the harms the system perpetuates, both from their own schooling and their careers, is to cause further harm. As we desperately look to grow and sustain our bilingual workforce primarily from adults who were themselves schooled during the English-only Proposition 227 era, pre-service programs and school districts need to consider how and in what ways they can attend to the harms caused by such policies, and *testimonios* are one avenue.

As seen in this study, in the pedagogical practice of *testimonios* Latina/o/x teachers at DHE made connections to other types of language-, culture-, and identity-affirming pedagogy. As they recognized that students were capable, they were more likely to engage in identity-

affirming pedagogy (I Am poems, home school connections, literature study/read alouds, etc.), and described instances of how they might engage in the future. This is conscious intentional professional work, which is just as valid and important as the pedagogy of biliteracy (speaking, listening, reading, and writing standards), as effort toward instructional equity. Creating the conditions in which children of color can thrive requires training and opportunities to examine our own privileges and oppressions. And it is the responsibility of those with power in the system—the administrators, faculty, and leaders—to create space in professional learning, to bring in experts in the field, and to pay teachers for job-embedded professional learning that allows for intentional engagement around racism, linguicism, and the practices that can affirm languages, cultures, and identities. Professional learning and development around *testimonios*, and the genuine engagement as a school community in the practice, should be prioritized. It should also be noted that leaders must also engage in their own intentional examination of the privileges and oppressions they hold. Do not ask teachers of color to go where you, too, have not been or do not have a willingness to go.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Finally, these implications suggest that the following policy recommendations be considered. First, ongoing bilingual teacher professional development and support (and preparation for pre-service teachers) needs to consider racial and linguistic harm recognition and reparation as important as biliteracy preparation. As a state, we continue to battle for precious instructional and professional development minutes. In this struggle, frequently curriculum, standards, and assessments win out. The state needs to dramatically overhaul and prioritize paid nonstudent contract days that are job embedded to allow teachers to engage in professional development that attends to those areas *and* to their own and students' social–emotional well-

being. In addition, this work is not "one and done." Critical consciousness, brought by open and brave discussions and reflection around race, language, and culture, requires ongoing attention throughout the school year at a system, district, site, classroom, and personal level. The work should be done across and within/by affinity groups by all levels of personnel. If we expect teachers to create these conditions for students—and we value the positive impact on climate and equity—then we need to model our adult systems as such.

Second, the larger field of dual immersion should consider how practices such as *testimonio* can strengthen the implementation of more socially just and equitable programs through critical consciousness. To this end the field may want to consider if the amendment of the third pillar from "cross-cultural understanding" to "sociocultural competence" (Howard et al., 2018) sufficiently covers the active engagement in racial, cultural, linguistic, and other intersectional identity critical consciousness called for by Palmer et al. (2019). The current context in bilingual education is primed for this type of clear and decisive action between Proposition 58, the EL Roadmap, the State Seal of Biliteracy, and most recently the 2022 California Department of Education's 10-million-dollar investment in bilingual education through dual language immersion grants. It is hard to imagine a better time than now to take a clear, unequivocal stance on the importance addressing systemic racism and linguicism.

Although I would hope this to be redundant and obvious, legislators should continue to support legislation such as Proposition 58, which mandates bilingual education in the state of California. As a scholar of bilingual history in California, however, I know that bilingual education has had the pendulum swing multiple times between exclusionary and inclusionary practices. As an example, currently the "reading wars/science of reading" have begun anew with an interesting rigor and passion reminiscent of No Child Left Behind and the pejorative focus on

foundational skills and a curriculum simplified to math and English language arts. This emphasis and disproportionate focus on foundational skills is counterproductive to what we know about the pedagogy of biliteracy and dual language learner students (all students, really), who require meaning and context in addition to foundational skills. I fear that a push for foundational skills in English will quickly slide back into an "English first" or "English-only" mentality. As *adelitas* in the field of dual language immersion, we must continue to testify at the state board of education level with data, research, and evidence to the effectiveness of bilingual education. We cannot rest.

Conclusion

Four years ago I sat in the main ballroom at the closing session of a SEAL bilingual convening and listened to my first *testimonio*. There in front of over 100 bilingually authorized teachers I watched one of my youngest first-year teachers speak her "brave truth unapologetically." Then another shared. And then a third shared his dreams. All three of them are still teachers at DHE. I was myself astounded, moved, and inspired. I also cried, as silently as possible, my mother-heart aching at the pain shared. I was angry, too, knowing that our educational systems continued to perpetrate hostilities against these Latina/o/x teachers, and knowing that I was a part of this system. This is where my curiosity around *testimonios* began, organically, as a witness.

Now I have the honor to try and do justice by these teachers and tell their story and experience with *testimonios* as a scholar practitioner. I am now a facilitator of *testimonio* workshops along with my amazing colleagues at SEAL. In that aspect, I have written and delivered my own *testimonio*, which is housed at the end of this dissertation. In my *testimonio*, I

explore my White female sequential bilingual positionality and examine instances of oppression against Latina/o/x teachers that I have witnessed while I was the principal of DHE.

DHE is an incredible school, with a highly committed teaching staff who are driven by passion and by a desire to do right by their students, many of whom are Latino/a/x emergent bilinguals. The teachers in this study are representative of the staff with their strong sense of equity and social justice in education, their commitment to the best instructional practices that are designed to center emergent bilingual students classified as English learners, and their deep understanding of the partnership required between families and the school. It is also evident from this study that these teachers have *testimonios* to share that are replete with instances of racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and other intersectional identity oppressions and triumphs. I have to wonder what the untold stories of the rest of the staff are, and what would happen for them to feel the same sense of connection, being seen and validated in the way these teachers described. It is my sincere hope that this work continues at DHE, that the leadership makes time for this professional learning, and that the staff continue their brave affirmations. Not only do they have the capacity to do so, I believe that in the process they will name current injustices in the system and make change. The teachers are worthy of this sacred space and time, and it will deepen their ability to engage in this work with students and families. To do so, however, we all need to examine our oppressions and our privileges so that we can open brave affirming spaces. As this bilingual teacher shortage continues—it will be years before we make up for the harms of English-only, the stripping of language—we must deliberately prioritize critical consciousness and the naming of system failures so that those who are in the field right now can persist and thrive.

References

Blackmer Reyes, K. & Curry Rodríguez, J. (2012). Testimonio: Origins, terms, and resources. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 45*(3), 525–538.

Briceño, A., & Rodriguez-Mojica, C. (2019). Critical consciousness in bilingual teacher preparation for emancipatory biliteracy. *The Bilingual Review/Revista Bilingüe, 34*(1), 1–21.

Briceño A, Rodriguez-Mojica, C., & Muñoz-Muñoz, E. (2018). From English learner to Spanish learner: Raciolinguistic beliefs that influence heritage Spanish speaking teacher candidates. *Language and Education, 32*(3), 212–226.

Burciaga, R. & Kohli, R. (2018). Disrupting whitestream measures of quality teaching: The community cultural wealth of teachers of color. *Multicultural Perspectives, 20*(1), 5–12.

California Department of Education (2020). California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) [aggregate data files]. Retrieved from http://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filesenr.asp

California Department of Education, Multilingual Support Division (2018). Illustrative example, root cause analysis, Davis Joint Unified School District. Retrieved from https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/rm/davisrootcause.asp

Cervantes-Soon, C. G., Dorner, L., Palmer, D., Heiman, D., Schwerdtfeger, R., & Choi, J. (2017). Combating inequalities in two-way language immersion programs: Toward critical consciousness in bilingual education spaces. *Review of Research in Education, 41*(1), 403–427.

Cuevas, P. A. (2016). The journey from de-culturalization to community cultural wealth: The power of a counter story-telling curriculum and how educational leaders can transform schools. *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal, 10*(3), 47–67.

Darling-Hammond, L., Sutcher, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). *Teacher shortages in California: Status, sources, and potential solutions* [Research brief]. Learning Policy Institute.

Delgado Bernal, D. (2002). Critical race theory, Latino critical theory, and critical raced-gendered epistemologies: Recognizing students of color as holders and creators of knowledge. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(1), 105–126.

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

Ek, L. D., Sanchez, P., & Quijada Cerecer, P. D. (2013). Linguistic violence, insecurity, and work: Language ideologies of Latina/o bilingual teacher candidates in Texas. *International Multilingual Research Journal, 7*(3), 197–219.

El Ashmawi, P., Hernandez Sanchez, E., & Flores Carmona, J. (2018). Testimonialista pedagogues: Testimonio pedagogy in critical multicultural education. *International Journal of Multicultural Education, 20*(1), 67–85.

Flores, N., & Rosa, J. (2015). Undoing appropriateness: Raciolinguistic ideologies and language diversity in education. *Harvard Educational Review, 85*(2), 149–171.

Howard, E. R., Lindholm-Leary, K. J., Rogers, D., Olague, N., Medina, J., Kennedy, B., Sugarman, J., & Christian, D. (2018). *Guiding principles for dual language education* (3rd ed.). Center for Applied Linguistics.

Kohli, R., & Pizarro, M. (2020). "I stopped sleeping": Teachers of color and the impact of racial battle fatigue. *Urban Education, 55*(7), 967–991.

Kohli, R., Pizarro, M., & Nevárez, A. (2017). The "new racism" of K–12 schools: Centering critical research on racism. *Review of Research in Education, 41,* 182–202.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record, 97*(1), 47–68.

Merriam, S. & Tisdell, E. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public school teacher data file," 2015–16. U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/tables/ntps1516_first_year_rev.asp

Nuñez, I., Villarreal, D., De Julio, S., Harvey. R., and Cardenas Curiel, L. (2021). Sustaining bilingual–biliterate identities: Latina/o/x preservice teachers' narrative representations of bilingualism and biliteracy across time and space. *Journal of Teacher Education, 72*(4), 419–430.

Palmer, D. (2007). A dual immersion strand programme in California: Carrying out the promise of dual language education in an English-dominant context. *International Journal of Bilingual Education & Bilingualism, 10*(6), 752–768.

Palmer, D., Cervantes-Soon, C., Dorner, L. & Heiman, D. (2019). Bilingualism, biliteracy, biculturalism, and critical consciousness for all: Proposing a fourth fundamental goal for two-way dual language education. *Theory Into Practice, 58*(2), 121–133.

Passos DeNicolo, C., González, M., Morales, S., & Romaní, L. (2015). Teaching through testimonio: Accessing community cultural wealth in school. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 14*(4), 228–243.

Pérez Huber, L. (2009). Disrupting apartheid of knowledge: *Testimonio* as methodology in Latina/o critical race research in education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 22*(6), 639–654.

Pour-Khorshid, F. (2018). Cultivating sacred spaces: A racial affinity group approach to support critical educators of color. *Teaching Education, 29*(4), 318–329.

Rodela, K., & Rodriguez-Mojica, C. (2020). Equity leadership informed by community cultural wealth: Counterstories of Latinx school administrators. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 56*(2), 289–320.

Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE Publications.

Solórzano, D. (1997). Images and words that wound: Critical race theory, racial stereotyping, and teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 24*(3), 5–19.

Sosa-Provencio, M. A., Sheahan, A., Fuentes, R., Muñiz, S., & Prada Vivas, R. E. (2019). Reclaiming ourselves through testimonio pedagogy: Reflections on a curriculum design lab in teacher education. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 22*(2), 211–230.

Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. P. (2012). *Dual language education for a transformed world*. Fuente Press.

University of California Davis School of Education (2009). *Eliminating inequities through the power of knowledge and the promise of education* [mission statement]. https://education.ucdavis.edu/our-school

Winstead, L., & Wang, C. (2017). From ELLs to bilingual teachers. *Multicultural Education, 24*(3–4), 10.

Yosso, T. J., Ceja, M., Smith, W., & Solórzano, D. (2009). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate for Latina/o undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review, 79*(4), 659–691.

Yosso, T.J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 8*(1), 69–91.

Yosso, T. J. (2006). Critical race counterstories along the Chicana/Chicano educational pipeline. Routledge.

Appendix A: Interview Protocol Bilingual Authorization Teacher in K–6 TWBI

Interview Questions Bilingual Authorization Teacher in TWBI

Introduction/Connection to Teaching and the School

1. Please tell me the grade level you teach, and how many years you have been a teacher.
2. What is one of your most important reasons for becoming a teacher?
3. What factors played a role in how you landed in a teaching position at this school?
4. What does it mean to you to be a bilingual teacher specifically? And to do this work at DHE in particular?
5. Now that you have been working at the school, what do you notice about the culture of the school?

Use of *Testimonios* and Impact on Self

6. Tell me about a time when you used or participated in a *testimonio* with colleagues, families of students, and/or students. Tell me who was the audience and how you delivered it (writing, oral, video, draw, label, etc.)?
7. Which experience(s) did you share in that *testimonio* and why?
8. Which identities or attributes did you share about yourself and why?
9. Earlier you mentioned your identity as a (fill in an identity around language, race, culture); how did your *testimonio* reflect that identity?
10. Did incorporating that identity help you reflect on it? If so, how?
11. How did you feel as a teller after engaging in the practice of *testimonio*?
12. If listening to others was part of the experience, how did you feel as a listener? Probe as needed: 1:1 experience, and whole-group share-out experience.

Testimonios and Engagement with Learning Community

13. Let's return to DHE for a moment. Has your experience with *testimonios* changed your understanding of the racial and linguistic influences and dynamics present at the school? If so, how has it changed?

14. How has this experience had an impact on your sense of community building in the school?

15. How did this experience impact your relationship with the person you shared with?

16. How did participants and witnesses respond? How did it affect you?

17. (Optional if time allows) If you have used a *testimonio* more than once, think about another time with a different audience (colleague, families, students) … Please tell me, did your practice or what you shared with your *testimonio* change based on your audience? If yes, how so?

    OR if they have not used it more than once, ask: Have you thought about a context in which you might like to share it again? If so, how and would what you share change/how so?

18. Did you have a copy of your written or recorded delivery of your *testimonio* you would be willing to share with me? Would you like to read or share it out loud right now? How did it make you feel to share it here with me?

Appendix B: My *Testimonio*

Bien nerviosa en el asiento atrás del taxi, recién llegada a Mendoza. 1996.
"Y tú, ¿cuántos años tienes?"

It's a simple enough question but I
Freeze.
Flipping the rolodex in my mind,
Is it here under the pages of essays I wrote on magical realism? No.
Look here in the list of subjunctive conjugations memorized. No.
It's a conversation. Find it …

"Sí."
"Ah … está bien, te llevo a la dirección."
No.

It's okay though, because this White sequential bilingual gets encouragement, patience, and praise when a perfectly rolled /r/ escapes or surprise! holds a complex conversation in a heated IEP meeting like a boss.

Positional power is tricky that way. Privilege here, privilege there, privilege, privilege everywhere.

Behind it? A lot of fear, scanning, searching, listening intently, pretending at times. Hoping la mamá who is pouring her heart out to me wearing the ankle bracelet from *la migra* does not realize I do not know what *temblar* means.

I do right now.

Language is contested space, we judge, we negate, we measure—how much do you know? How "academic" is your language? Is it "academic" enough? What does that really mean? What weapons do we yield from our tongues when we question the language you hold ingrained in your soul? When I—me in this skin, in this position, that girl who didn't even know how old she was—when she, when she makes space for that conversation.

Allows doubt, judgment brought on by years of English Only hegemony, the stripping and criminalizing of language—to surface.

So thank you, to the teachers, *mis colegas, las guerreras, tanto a las mamás*, who have taught me
quienes me han enseñado
como sentir en español,
como respirar en español

How to pause and think before I speak.