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Teacher Activism for Emergent Bilingual Learners: A Qualitative Study

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of
Montclair State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Montclair State University

Montclair, NJ

May 2022

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Emily J. Klein

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY
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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

We hereby approve the Dissertation

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of

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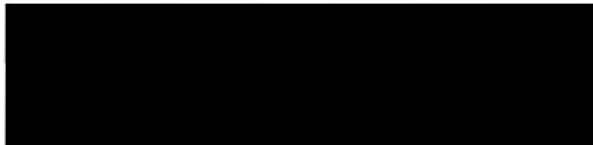
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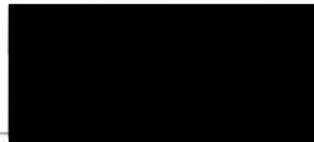
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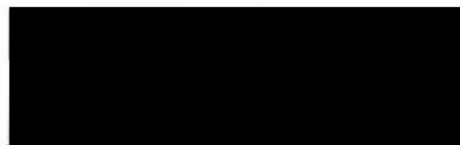
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Abstract

This qualitative dissertation study explored what informed the pedagogical moves of four teacher activists of emergent bilingual learners (EBLs). Quijano's (2000) theory of coloniality of power served as a theoretical lens to examine the historical underpinnings of current education language legislation and policies impacting EBLs. There is a growing body of literature on teacher activism, but very few studies center teacher activism for linguistic justice. Picower's (2012) framework for teacher activism was used to create data sources, which included interviews, artifacts, field visits, and personal communication. Data were analyzed using open and axial coding strategies. Findings were presented in four separate portraits—detailing each teacher activist's conceptions of teacher activism and rich examples of each educator's activism enacted inside and outside of their classrooms. This study concluded that teacher activists of EBLs possess dispositions with unique composition, exhibit a keen critical awareness of deficit raciolinguistic ideologies, and employ the use of culturally sustaining pedagogies in their classrooms. Each teacher activist's portrait evidenced a nonlinear and dynamic relationship between their in-classroom and out-of-classroom activism, and spaces of hybridity mediated by contextual factors. The anticolonial methodological approach to collecting and analyzing data in the study created authentic opportunities for critical dialogue and critical reflection between the researcher and the teacher activists. Implications for teacher education, education research, and conceptions of activism are presented.

Keywords: teacher activism, emergent bilingual learners, coloniality of power

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation and all my accomplishments to my elders and ancestors. Because of your resiliency, strength, and hope, I have come this far.

I am my “ancestor’s wildest dreams” (Ledet, 2019)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The end of the school year was approaching. Most classrooms had dimmed lights and movies showing on the SMART boards. In my little office-cum-classroom, a small group of students and I sat around a circular table reading the first chapter of Jerry Spinelli's novel for children, *Maniac Magee*. Some students were mandated to meet with me as per their Individual Education Programs (IEP); others were deemed "at-risk" and were scheduled to see me in to "catch up" with their peers. Others simply tagged along because they did not want to watch movies in their classrooms. These students were all from immigrant homes and were all marginalized in the student body of the elementary school.

I remember our discussion of *Maniac Magee*, the topic of orphanhood, and how it must have felt when the protagonist Maniac Magee loses his parents. Anna, a fourth-grader, leaned in and whispered to me as the others talked amongst themselves. She said, "My mom might have cancer. I'm scared because she don't got papers." I did not quite know how to respond, telling her "not to worry." Now, in hindsight, I know that was easier said than done.

Statement of the Problem

There are many students like Anna (a pseudonym) who are faced with challenges that stem from immigration policy and xenophobia. Over the last twenty years, there has been an uptick in United States-sanctioned Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids and deportations of undocumented people. Golash-Boza (2019) found that "between 1997 and 2016, 5.7 million people were deported from this country, over twice the sum total of all deportations in the nation's history prior to 1997 (p. 1332). Many families are forced to decide if they should risk taking a loved one to the hospital for care for fear of detention or deportation, among other crises. While second-generation students like Anna have "papers," a colloquialism for

documentation of U.S. citizenship, many in their extended family may not. Many remain silent because they do not read or speak English or cannot communicate in English in a way that those in power might listen. Language, like documentation, has been used as a marker for who belongs in our society and who should be marginalized or removed. Thus, emergent bilingual students are often marginalized in the education system because their language use signals that they do not belong.

When I was teaching Anna, I did not understand the political and legislative terrain of the classroom. I knew my students needed a space to feel free—free to use their home languages, embrace their cultures, and feel successful as learners. I did not have the professional toolkit to take my students' words and advocate for change within our school and the community. I barely knew what to say when Anna disclosed her fear for her mother's health and immigration status. To be emotionally supportive was all I knew. I tried to make text selections and craft lessons that I thought would be relatable to my students and their experiences. Picower (2012b) described teachers like me, who integrated social justice issues into their curricula but who fell short outside of their classrooms as educators “stuck at the classroom door” (p. 71). Educators who are “stuck at the classroom door” rely on “tools of inaction” when faced with social justice issues that warrant intervention outside of school.

I was “stuck at the classroom door as Anna's teacher.” Fortunately, educators and teacher coalitions are mobilizing schools and communities to address the academic, social-emotional, and political needs of English learners from mixed-status communities. Arguably, teaching is a political act that transcends the four walls of the classroom (Freire & Macedo, 2018; Nieto, 2006; Sinha, 2016). The pedagogical moves I used in my classroom created an environment for Anna to share her fears with me, yet I lacked the courage and tools to act on the

issues that my students brought to me. Teacher activists and teacher activist coalitions “reconcile the vision” (Picower, 2012b, p. 87) of what social justice education should look like inside and outside their classrooms. Social justice education is fully realized when educators are committed to fighting against injustice wherever it appears.

My dissertation study examined how teacher activists working with emergent bilingual learners (EBLs)¹ describe their work and the factors that inform how they teach and participate in activism. The following research questions were created to guide my dissertation research:

- What informs the decision-making of teacher activists of EBLs?
- How do these decisions impact their pedagogical moves both in and outside of their classrooms?

To conclude this chapter, I explain the sociopolitical structures used to operationalize coloniality in language education in the United States by unpacking key English-only legislation and education language policies that have created oppressive conditions for EBLs, their families, and their communities, and the educators. Activism and activist pedagogy relate specifically to teacher activists of emergent bilingual students.

Sociopolitical Background

Language policy in education has become a battleground for immigration and other related social, political, and economic issues. Even though there is no official language of the United States on a federal level, language and education policies have had a contentious impact on the English-language political agenda for American schooling. According to Banks (2016),

¹ I use the term English Language Learner (ELL) when discussing legislative and policy issues as they relate to students whose first language is not English, as this is the term most often used in that context (García et al., 2008). García (2009) developed the term emergent bilingual learner (EBL) to acknowledge the fact that students with home languages other than English have cultural and linguistic identities outside of simply learning English. When discussing students who have a home language other than English outside of a policy context, I use EBL.

“American classrooms are experiencing the largest influx of immigrant students since the beginning of the 20th century. Almost 14 million new immigrants —documented and undocumented—settled in the United States” (p. xii). Renewed interest in immigration and language in the political sphere has found its way into issues surrounding schooling. The law also reinforces language discrimination and xenophobia. Discriminatory education practices directed at EBLs are deeply embedded within the de facto and de jure English-only instruction policies implemented in the United States between the 1990s and early 2000s.

Language identity in the United States has never been neutral. Rovira (2008) asserted, “Language is intrinsic to the expression of culture. . . It is how we convey our innermost self from generation to generation. It is through language that we transmit and express our culture and its values” (p. 66). American English has been codified as the lingua franca and the language of power of the land. According to Gándara et al. (2010), “What may seem like an irrational idea—that English would ever lose its hegemony in U.S. culture given its clear world dominance—it is a proxy for concern about social and economic opportunity. In a multilingual state, language becomes a critical marker of social and political status” (p. 22). Thus, emergent bilingual learners who are not proficient speakers of Standard American English (SAE) are omitted from cultural expressions of being “American” due to the misalignment between the hegemonic positioning of SAE proficiency being a marker of “Americanness” and the lack of proficiency of SAE as the antithesis to this cultural identity. Due to the lack of an official national language, some states such as Arizona, California, and Massachusetts adopted policies that dictate language education that privileged English-only instruction for EBLs. Schools, curricula, and classrooms have become proxies for implementing immigration and language policy. The following section unpacks several federal, and state-level education language policies, their

impact on language education for EBLs, and the roles teachers play in the interpretation and implementation of these policies within their classrooms.

Politics, Policy, and Learning English

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), signed into law in 2002, provided added accountability and assessment for public school students. English Language Learners (ELLs) were not exempt from this mandate. Following the legislative fights of the 1950s to the 1970s to secure students' right to their own language (Scott et al., 2009; Smitherman, 1995) and the preservation of students' heritage languages (Mahoney et al., 2020), NCLB gave states the ammunition to introduce, and in some cases, solidify pre-existing English-only policies for the instruction of ELLs. Arizona, California, and Massachusetts passed laws that mandated English-only instruction, despite second-language acquisition research that supports that English-only instruction for ELLs can be detrimental to these students' acquisition of Academic English and their overall performance in schools (Collier, 1989; Guerrero, 2004; Hakuta et al., 2000). Proposition 227 (CA law, 1998), Referendum Question 2 (MA law, 2002), and Proposition 203 (AZ law, 2000) are all examples of de jure English-only language education legislation or legislation that has been sanctioned by law (MacSwan et al., 2017; Menken, 2009; Villanueva, 2000). Ovando (2003) asserted the "response to language diversity was shaped by the changing localized political, social, and economic forces rather than by systematic ideas about language itself" (pp. 2-3). NCLB and state-legislated English-only instructional policy are prime examples of how political, social, and economic forces can shape teaching and learning for ELL students.

Education language policy can be mandated through law or enacted in practice without legislated formality. Upon implementing NCLB, schools and their districts were tasked with interpreting and creating policies to meet its mandates. Scripted curricula became one of the

ways many districts sought to address NCLB's Reading First program mandates. These de facto English-only policies privileged English instruction for ELLs by implementing a scripted, standards-based curriculum (Ghiso & Campano, 2013; Spencer et al., 2011). Whether through legislation or district and/or school-based policy, teachers of ELLs are negotiating what kinds of instruction are best for themselves and their students. Education language policy scholars likened this complexity in teacher negotiation of language policy for their ELL students to peeling back the layers of an onion (Menken & Garcia, 2010; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Recent influxes of immigrant students, coupled with more standardized approaches to teaching and learning, have presented educators with difficult decisions in their classrooms. Legislation akin to the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968, which promoted and protected education practices that embraced students' home languages and cultures (Varghese & Stritikus, 2005), has been replaced by laws that promote students' acquisition of English as quickly as possible with little regard to the maintenance of these students' home languages and linguistic identities. These mandates also include the expectation that ELL students score just as high as their monolingual English-speaking peers on standardized exams across content areas (California Department of Education, 1999) in less time than research findings support is sufficient for ELLs to acquire the Academic English required for proficiency on these assessments (Collier, 1989; Guerrero, 2004; Hakuta et al., 2000). Although NCLB and similar state-sanctioned language education legislation led to the creation of rigid, scripted, and less responsive curricula for linguistically diverse learners, educators used the curricula with varying levels of fidelity and compliance, which shows the distinct role teachers play in negotiating language education policy. Despite their absence from traditional education policy spaces, such as government houses of legislation and district-level board rooms, teachers play an integral role in interpreting and implementing

education language policy. Therefore, it is essential to investigate how teachers interpret and enact policy when the policy is at odds with the needs of their emergent bilingual students.

The proliferation of restrictive education language policies makes the argument for teacher activism for EBLs of the utmost priority. Teachers, although rarely included in the initial creation of language and education policymaking, Although rarely included in the initial creation of language and education policymaking, teachers become the central figures in the implementation of language education policy in the classroom. Menken and Garcia (2010) argued, “Educators are the epicenter of this dynamic process, acting on their agency to change the various language education policies they must translate into practice” (p. 1). Top-down language policies are shaped by the educators, who interpret and implement these education policies into practice within their classrooms. The organized efforts of English-only policymakers require an equally organized opposition. Teacher activism can serve as one of many outlets to fight against policies and legislation that seek to marginalize EBL youth and their communities. In the next chapter, I provide the theoretical underpinnings of coloniality in education policy and practice and how its presence informs the oppression and marginalization of immigrant communities of color who speak languages other than English.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

It becomes difficult to separate language education policies from the inherent remnants of colonialism and its effects on the colonized. As history has shown, discrimination and the disenfranchisement of marginalized people are often enacted using policy and legislation. This is the case for many people who are not fluent in the language variety of power in the United States, Standard American English (SAE), which is also called the “language of wider communication” (Smitherman, 1995) in linguistic circles. Coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000) or the “colonial matrix of power” that is continually reproduced in the modern or post-colonial world (Mignolo, 2007, p. 157) served as the theoretical framework I used to study how colonial impacts are still being reproduced in language education policy and practice. The United States context illustrates the complex yet contradictory terrain where coloniality of power is embedded within the American ideology of citizenship and linguistic privilege. Hsu (2017) argued that the “prevalence of colonial English imposition” had been used as “a historical technique for establishing global conquest” (p. 111). Therefore, I argue that the remnants of empire colonialism or coloniality of power live on in the discourses surrounding citizenship and the legality of belonging in the United States and the cultural markers, like language, that codify these hegemonic structures. The theory of coloniality of power provides a dynamic way to understand the interplay between language and power, especially related to the enterprise of English Language Teaching (ELT) for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students.

Coloniality of Power in English Language Teaching

Coloniality (Mignolo, 2007), or coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000), serves as a useful tool to help expose and unpack the complex, and at times invisible, effects of empire

colonialism. Common discourses surrounding the racial, cultural, and linguistic mismatch between public school teachers and the increasingly diverse public school student population ignore the underlying structural inequalities embedded within the U.S. public school system. Coloniality refers to the political, ideological, psychological, and epistemological effects of colonialism, including those present in the process of schooling. Scholars who write about coloniality (Grosfoguel, 2007; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2007), including Quijano (2000), the creator of this concept, use the terms “coloniality of power” and “coloniality” interchangeably.

Maldonado-Torres (2007) argued that “Coloniality . . . is maintained alive in books, in criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in the aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience” (p. 243). This conception of the eternal presence of colonialism is a helpful idea to consider when trying to understand the work of teachers of EBLs. The current field of teaching linguistically diverse students is often centered on teaching students to learn English and assimilate to privileged ways of being at the cost of losing their home languages, cultures, and diverse ways of knowing. Coloniality is at the core of this push to whittle down curricula, instruction, and pedagogy for linguistically diverse students to English acquisition and assimilationist milestones of achievements (i.e., standardized test scores, success in boxed curriculum, sustained silence reading, etc.).

Akin to teaching in general, ELT is neither simple nor apolitical. Colonialism is embedded in the practice of schooling in general and in teaching English language specifically. Motha (2014) stated, “The spread of the English language historically accompanied colonial endeavors . . . So, a colonial imprint is stamped into our profession and remains there indelibly

even in a modern-day context in which English is presented as intensely desirable through global media and the English-teaching industry” (p. 27). The English language is considered a global language recognized as a language of power across the world. Its acquisition is highly valued in financial markets, politics, and education. Motha (2014) noted how the remnants of colonialism or empire can still be found within present-day society and the structures that exist within it. The concept of empire (lowercase e) is often used synonymously with imperialism. She explained how empires of the past (e.g., the British Empire) helped to frame ELT as providing equity, access, and social mobility. Present-day Empire (capital E) shows the more “complicated power relationship” that exists when a deliberate colonial enterprise is not overtly being proliferated by a government or country (Hardt & Negri, 2000; Motha, 2014). As English is spread, it reinforces “colonial divisions of power and racial inequality” (Motha, 2014, p. xxi). Globalized English reinforces hegemonic social and economic power relations and results “in heritage language loss, in the extinction of less-commonly-spoken languages and their inherent epistemologies” (Motha, 2014, p. xxi). Using coloniality of power as a framework for understanding ELT helps us to understand better how the globalization of English represents a deliberate plan made by dominant groups to subjugate others, which can be operationalized in the education EBLs receive.

The relationship between language and power must be examined to understand the dynamics of English instruction in American classrooms. Teacher activism can be used to uncover, resist, tear down, and reimagine teaching and learning for EBLs, where their identities are interwoven within the classroom rather than erased or pushed aside. Teacher activists of EBL students fight against these power structures on both micro-and macro-levels of education and policy. They understand how language is a marker of status and privilege against which EBL

students are measured. These educators work to dismantle linguistic power dynamics that privilege a narrow Eurocentric approach to language, linguistic identities, and ways of knowing. The hegemonic relationship between English education can be traced back to the influences of colonialism and the proliferation of English across the globe. Motha (2014) explained how “language is more than a collection of words and phrases . . . It is imbued with a history and undertones and associations that reach far beyond the actual mechanics of the system” (p. 4). Language can be thought of as an extension of the speaker’s identity. The process of colonizing one’s language can be seen as colonizing one’s identity. Tolman (2006) asserted, “The colonized man speaks the language of the colonizer in order to exist in the colonizer’s eyes, not his own . . . It must be reasoned that the language classroom epitomizes a self-producing and reproducing colonized world” (p. 192). Teacher activists for EBLs realize the mission of social justice education by “using education as a vehicle for liberation” (Picower, 2012b, p. 3). Whether it is their use of home language(s) and honoring diverse ways of knowing in their classroom pedagogy or organizing in solidarity with families and communities through community-based activist pedagogy, teacher activists fight against having their work with their students reproduce a colonized world. Through activism, teachers of EBLs teach and organize for the liberation of their students and themselves.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This qualitative dissertation study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- What informs the decision-making of teacher activists of emergent bilingual students within mixed-status communities?
- How do these decisions impact their pedagogical moves both in and out of their classrooms?

Methodological Approach

I used a qualitative research study design to understand how teachers conceptualize their work as teacher activists and the elements that inform their activist pedagogy. According to Merriam (2009), “The overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an *understanding* [emphasis in original] of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience” (p. 14). The qualitative research methodology was the best fit for the goals of this study because I was able to understand how the four teacher activists in the study defined and made meaning of their work as teacher activists through inductive and comparative processes.

The approaches I used in this study borrowed from the traditions of interpretive, critical, and postcolonial perspectives of qualitative research (Merriam, 2009, p. 38). Emphasis was placed on the meaning that participants construct of their realities; thus, the use of semi-structured interviews served as a primary data source in this study. This dissertation took the stance that teaching is a political act (Freire, 2000) and research is a political act (Patel, 2016). I employed an anticolonial research methodology to build relationships with participants and create generative spaces to have critical discourse to learn how teachers negotiate the power dynamics associated with their teacher activism. Postcolonial traditions of qualitative research

seek to deconstruct/disrupt whose knowledge is privileged and what counts as knowledge (Merriam, 2009; Patel, 2016). My intent in learning about teacher activists and their pedagogy is to enact what Tuck (2016) called a “pedagogy of pausing,” an intentional suspension of the researcher’s own premise and project with a focus on what is to come.”(p. xii) Therefore, my study, albeit nested within specific perspectives or traditions of qualitative research, shifted from participant to participant based on the meaning-making derived from data analysis and member checks.

Chapter 4 is presented as four portraits to provide rich and deep descriptions of each teacher activist’s conceptions of teacher activism and how those conceptions are translated into their activist work inside and outside their classrooms. Borrowing from the methodology of portraiture, “a method of social science inquiry distinctive in its blending of art and science, capturing the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience and organizational life” (<http://www.saralawrencelightfoot.com/portraiture1.html>), each educator’s experience and activist work is written as a portrait. Using portraits, I present dynamic representations of how each teacher activist conceptualized their work and how these conceptions play out in their classrooms and daily lives.

Recruitment and Participants

This dissertation study focused on the experiences of four teacher activists. Purposive sampling (Merriam, 2009) was employed to ensure that the participants selected for the study offered insights into the world of the teacher activist. Patton (1990) argued that “it is important to select *information-rich cases* (as separate from case study research) for study in depth.

Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn about issues of central importance to

the purpose of research, thus the term purposeful sampling.” (p. 169, emphasis in the original) I drafted a boilerplate letter circulated in teacher activist spaces both in-person and virtually.

Additionally, I created a recruitment flyer containing key aspects of the recruitment letter, which proved to be more suitable for finding participants on social media outlets. I used snowball sampling (Merriam, 2009) as a recruitment strategy. Snowball sampling, or network sampling, occurs when the researcher asks participants to provide referrals to additional participants who may also meet the study's criteria. While some educators did not meet the criteria of being a teacher activist for EBLs, these teachers referred me to participants who met the criteria of my study. I networked with educators and educator networks to ensure that the study with participants served as rich sources of information about the work of teacher activists of EBLs.

The four teacher activists of emergent bilingual youth in this study were selected using criteria outlined in Picower's (2012b) framework of teacher activism. Picower (2012b) identified three core commitments of teacher activism in her framework: a) reconciling the vision (the teacher activist holds a vision of a socially just world and consistently works to reconcile this vision with the realities of inequality that they see in the world around them, p. 88), b) moving toward liberation (how teacher activists engage in activism in their own lives and also how they see their role to prepare and support their students to develop both the mindsets and the skillsets needed to take action to create liberatory change, p. 90); and c) standing up to oppression (how teacher activists commit to stand up against injustices that they see individually and collectively, p. 95). Picower acknowledged that these commitments could be “mapped” into other areas of education literature. Still, she asserted that “how the teacher activists put these three commitments together is what represents teacher activism (Picower, 2012a, p. 564). Drawing upon Picower's (2012a, b) framework of teacher activism, participants were selected to

participate in the study if they met the three commitments outlined in the framework. My boilerplate recruitment letter posed questions that asked each participant about each commitment of the framework (See, Appendix 1.1). The four educators selected answered affirmatively to questions corresponding to each of the three commitments. The framework of teacher activism was an important tool because teacher activists do not always use the language of activism to identify themselves or their work (Hung, 2018). Instead, if educators saw themselves and/or their work within the text of the framework, they met the parameters of the study); this was evident in Kevin's portrait in the next chapter. Once I received confirmation of interest from Kevin, Glenda, Mar-y-Sol, and Jessie (see Table 1) to participate in the study, I stopped recruiting participants and began the data collection process. Data sources collected for this study are outlined below.

Glenda

Glenda was 26 years old at the time of our first interview. When we met, she had just completed her first year of teaching as a dual-language kindergarten teacher in an Old City public school. She described herself as a White², Jewish, cisgender woman from an affluent background. Although Glenda was new to public school teaching, she had taught English in many parts of the world and is fluent in several languages due to formal language instruction, language exchange with childhood caretakers, and her global travel experience.

² I have intentionally chosen to capitalize White when referring to people who are racialized as White. I believe that minimizing the racial classification of White people perpetuates the lack of discourse about the significance of Whiteness. I capitalize White to encourage White people to interrogate their Whiteness as part of the process of racialization (Omni and Winant, 1986) which coloniality continues to etch into every aspect of society. Sociologist Eve Ewing argued, "As long as White people do not ever have to interrogate what Whiteness is, where it comes from, how it operates, or what it does, they can maintain the fiction that race is other people's problem, that they are mere observers in a centuries-long stage play in which they have, in fact, been the producers, directors, and central actors" (Ewing, 2020, para. 7).

Jessie

Jessie was 39 years old at the time of the first interview. She described herself as a “White, genderqueer, middle-class, Italian, and Irish person.” Jessie taught at a large city international high school as an eleventh and twelfth-grade social studies and English as a New Language (ENL) teacher. All the students at her urban high school are considered newcomers in her district due to their time of arrival in the United States during their high school career. Jessie also served as her school’s restorative justice coordinator, which became a part of her teacher activism. Jessie was involved in local, national, and international activism throughout her career.

Kevin

Kevin was 35 years old at the time of our first interview. Although he had worked in education for over ten years, he was enrolled in his first year of a teacher residency program at the start of this study. Kevin’s residency site was within an urban third-grade general education classroom with many EBLs. Kevin described himself as a Black/Garifuna, cisgender male who hailed from Creektown. Kevin’s pride in his hometown was a part of his identity. Kevin had no formal training in working with emergent bilingual youth, but his love of hip-hop, education, and his community aided him in teaching these students.

Mar-y-Sol

Mar-y-Sol was 25 years old at the time of our first interview. She was also from Creektown. Mar-y-Sol had been teaching for five years as a dual-language third-grade teacher at a public school in Creektown. She described herself in myriad ways, mainly due to her mixed heritage. Mar-y-Sol considered herself a queer, bilingual (Spanish and English), Brown, Afro-Latinx, and Black woman (although she is intentional about saying that her physical characteristics are not always perceived as those belonging to a Black woman). Mar-y-Sol

celebrated being a bilingual Afro-Latinx teacher in her district, largely comprised of White women.

Each participant's conceptions of their teacher activism and detailed examples of their activist work will be presented in Chapter 4.

Table 1

Study Participant Demographic

Participants	Glenda	Jessie	Kevin	Mar-y-Sol Toka
Age	26	39	35	26
Race/ Ethnicity	White/Jewish	White/Italian/ Irish	Black/Guatemalan/ Garifuna	Black/Puerto- Rican/Mixed/Afro- Latinx
Language(s) Spoken	English/Spanish/ French/Portuguese, Chinese/Hebrew	English	English	English/Spanish
Gender Identity	Cisgender Woman	Gender Queer	Cisgender Male	Queer Woman
Teaching Experience (yrs.)	2	15	< 1/ 13*	4
Teacher Activist Roles (s)	K/1 ESL& Dual- language Teacher/Co-Bldg. Union Rep.	HS Social Studies Teacher & TESOL/ Restorative Justice Coord. / Union Organizer	Elem. Teacher Resident/Youth Educator	Elem. Dual- language Teacher/Critical PD Facilitator

Data Sources

Several data sources were collected and analyzed to best support the inductive process that a qualitative research study entails to answer this study's research questions. Data collection

took many forms. After receiving IRB approval to begin data collection, I conducted two semi-structured interviews with each participant. I accompanied Mar-y-Sol, Kevin, and Jessie on field visits to their respective “sites of activism” (Burstein & Montaña, 2011). While on these site visits, I collected field notes and asked participants more semi-structured questions from the interview protocol. Participants simultaneously sent me pedagogical and activist artifacts of their choosing via a password-protected Dropbox shared folder. Throughout the data collection period, the participants and I maintained ongoing personal communication via email, text messages, and direct messaging on social media platforms. The various forms of data sources are outlined in greater detail below.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Two rounds of 60–90 minute semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain insight into how participants came to their work as teachers and activists. As Merriam et al. (2002) wrote: “The semi-structured interview contains a mix of more and less structured questions” (p. 13). I created an interview guide (Patton, 2015) with interview protocols to determine the structure, question types, and order of questions. During the first round of interviews, I asked each participant more structured questions regarding their demographics, how they self-identify as an educator and/or activist, and their conceptions of teacher activism (See Appendix 1.1).

Before beginning the second round of semi-structured interviews, I transcribed each interview using the automated audio to text transcription service Temi. Interview transcripts were coded using open coding strategies. During this time, I also completed analytic memos (Saldaña, 2015) to inform the creation of interview questions for the second round of interviews. The second round of semi-structured interviews focused on gaining a deeper understanding of the participants’ activist pedagogy within and outside of their classrooms for emergent bilingual

youth, following my analysis of the first round of interviews and field notes collected during my sites of activism visit. The ultimate goal of these semi-structured interviews was to understand how participants were making meaning of their experiences both within and outside of their classrooms.

Sites of Activism Visits

Part of the criteria for teacher activists includes participation in political and/or social action outside of their classrooms. I accompanied three of the four teacher activists to at least one event at a site of activism (Montaño & Burstein, 2006). For example, Mar-y-Sol invited me to an Indigenous Peoples museum while she planned for her students' visit and outreached to community and museum-based educators who would be presenting for her class. I also had the opportunity to join Kevin at a hip-hop workshop for youth and youth educators at a teacher education institution. Finally, Jessie invited me to attend a rally supporting district-wide culturally relevant instruction with her, her students, and her community partners. During each site of activism visit, I was encouraged by participants to fully participate in the activism that was taking place. Due to the participants' invitation to me to fully engage in the activities occurring at the site of activism, I was allowed to gain a more emic perspective (Merriam, 2009) of how the teacher activists in this study enacted activism for and with emergent bilingual youth.

Field Notes

Using Patton's (2015) "Ten Strengths of High-Quality Observations," I documented my observations and experiences with the teacher activists using notes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997) to understand better what was being observed using "rich description" and continuing to being open to "testing old assumptions and generating new insights" (p. 335). I kept a written and digital research journal to jot down notes, observations, questions, and insights throughout the data

collection process. I also created analytic memos (Saldaña, 2015) and completed reflexive writing exercises (Luttrell, 2010) throughout the data collection and data analysis process. These exercises and analytic tools were used to take pause (Patel, 2016), self-reflect, and create opportunities for me to remain close yet critical, throughout the research process.

Pedagogical Artifacts

Study participants were asked to select at least three pedagogical artifacts that they believed represented their activist pedagogy. The pedagogical artifacts included unit plans, lesson plans, family letters, classroom charts, etc. These pedagogical artifacts are shown and described in greater detail in Chapter 4. The teacher activists also provided contextual information about the artifacts during semi-structured interviews and site visits to help me gain further insight into how they made decisions about their work as teacher activists of EBLs.

Activism Artifacts

To aid my understanding of the forms of activism in which the EBL teacher activists engaged, I asked participants to share artifacts that they felt were representative of their activist work. With the permission of the teacher activists, during sites of activism visits, I took photos of artifacts I felt offered more insights into how teacher activism could be conceptualized. I refer to these photos in Mar-y-Sol's portrait in Chapter 4. The participants provided me with activism artifacts through Dropbox, including event fliers, meeting agendas, museum resources, social media correspondence, and photos from previously organized/attended activist activities. Name and place identifiers were redacted in the final analysis and publication of this study.

Personal Communication

Personal communications were a vital data source for learning and clarifying how participants engaged in activism inside and outside of the classroom, including email, memos,

text messages, and social media direct messages. Personal communication was a useful resource in remaining in contact with participants throughout the research process, and these data also served as opportunities to clarify and revise the co-created meaning-making.

Data Management and Analysis

Data collection and analysis were ongoing and simultaneous (Merriam et al., 2002) to promote saturation of data (Merriam et al., 2002), where the findings reflected themes that repeatedly emerge across data sources. All data sources were coded using open and axial (Corbin & Strauss, 1967) coding strategies. Consistent with ensuring internal validity and reliability in other forms of research, this qualitative dissertation study adhered to multiple forms of ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness. Detailed descriptions for each are outlined in the following two sections of this chapter.

Ethics

This dissertation study involved the participation of human subjects. Hence, I sought and received the permission of the Montclair State Institutional Review Board (IRB) through expedited review. There were minimal risks involved in this study. Study participants were adults who voluntarily agreed to participate in this study. Participants were informed of their right to leave the study at any point in a written consent form approved by the IRB. Participants' requests to remove something said, submitted, or observed were honored and reflected in each draft of this dissertation study without hesitation. To ensure the confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms of names and places were used in the collection, analysis, and reporting of all data. In instances where pseudonyms of names and locations would not maintain the confidentiality of the participants, text and images were redacted to protect participants' identities.

All electronic data, both raw data and analyzed data, were stored on my research computer, which was secured with a password for each log-in. A Dropbox folder was created for participants to upload any digital artifacts securely. Shared Dropbox files and folders were set to a private setting, which required each participant to have a secure username and password. All identifiers, such as names and places, were given pseudonyms or redacted throughout the study's data collection, analysis, and reporting stages. Paper data, such as pedagogical artifacts, activist artifacts, research journals, and field notes, were also stored securely in a locked filing cabinet in my home. Similar to my handling of raw electronic data and analyzed data, paper data sources with identifiers, such as names and places, were given pseudonyms or redacted throughout the study's data collection, analysis, and reporting stages.

Trustworthiness

One of the tenets of qualitative research is the researcher as the primary research instrument (Merriam, 2009). While there are a plethora of benefits in serving as a human instrument to aid in understanding phenomena in this study, particular subjectivities can arise. As Merriam wrote, "In qualitative research, it is the rich, thick descriptions, the words (not numbers) that persuade the reader of the trustworthiness of the findings" (Merriam, 2002, p. 15). Data analysis was simultaneous and ongoing throughout the research process to promote saturation and triangulation of data (Denzin, 1970). The multiple data points collected in this study and the analytic tools used during data analysis, commonly referred to as an audit trail (Dey, 1993), helped clarify how data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted throughout the study.

Employing member checks (Maxwell, 2005) throughout the research process was my attempt to ensure the internal validity of the data and the methods in which the data were being analyzed and maintain the relational aspects of anticolonial research methodology. Member

checks were a vital part of the research process; these moments of pause afforded me the chance to check in with participants and confirm that my interpretation of the data “rings true” (Merriam, 2002) for participants. In addition to the use of member checks, I utilized methods of peer review of raw data through periodic meetings with “critical friends.” My critical friends provided constructive feedback and support in determining additional spaces where I should “take pause” and check in with participants about my data interpretation. I also relied heavily on critical feedback from my dissertation committee throughout the research process to ensure the validity and reliability of this study.

Researcher Positionality

At the beginning of this dissertation, I shared a vignette from my experience teaching a group of emergent bilingual students at an elementary school early in my teaching career. My interest in understanding what teacher activism might look like for EBLs grew out of my own reflections on my problems of practice. In addition to my professional experiences with EBLs, as a novice researcher, I have followed how politics, policies, and rhetoric shaped how teachers do their work. The passage of NCLB and English-only education legislation, contentious debates on cultural and linguistic topics in curricula, and the rise of xenophobic practices internationally and in the United States were strong influencers in the development of my research questions and this dissertation study.

As a Black, cisgender, mid-career educator, who has worked mainly in urban school districts with students who were often situated at the margins of the school community (i.e., Black and Brown students with IEPs, varying levels of state-determined linguistic and literacy proficiency, belonging to mixed-status families/communities, and/or recipients of free or reduced lunch-often a proxy for low-income families), I have always been interested in how the material

conditions for my students could be improved. My master's and doctorate-level education has helped me use theory to make sense of the how and why of the state of education for so many Black and Brown youth.

Although I was born and raised in a large urban city and educated through that city's public education system, I am aware that my experience is just that—*my* experience. I came to this study with an openness to learning from participants and practicing intentional pauses (Patel, 2016) before data analysis to ensure that I was being as reflexive as I can as a researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 2011). Rather than positioning this study as one that I owned or belonged to me, I sought to approach this dissertation study as one of answerability or “a construct or cognitive tool” (Patel, 2016, p. 73) to enable me as a novice educational researcher to make the shift from simply writing about discourses and problems of practice to taking action alongside the participants in the study (Battiste, 2013; Patel, 2016). Patel (2016) asserted:

Perhaps one of the most explicit decolonial moves we can make at this moment is to sit still long enough to see clearly what we need to reach beyond. Without pause, it's challenging to ascertain what structures, what inequitable structures, are enlivened by narratives, even and perhaps, especially the progressive narratives. (p. 88)

Akin to teaching, I see the process of becoming a researcher as a political act. This dissertation study was my opportunity to “sit still long enough to see clearly what [I] need to reach beyond” (p. 568) in my journey of becoming a scholar-activist (Picower, 2012a) and education researcher.

Chapter 4: Findings

This qualitative research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) examined how four educators, three practicing public school teachers, and a teacher resident in a public school working with emergent bilingual learners (EBLs) described their conceptions of teacher activism and examined the factors that informed how they teach and participate in activism. The following research questions guided my dissertation research:

- What informs the decision-making of teacher activists of emergent bilingual students?
- How do these decisions impact their pedagogical moves both inside and outside of their classrooms?

Using Quijano's (2000) concept of coloniality of power as a theoretical lens of analysis, I collected and analyzed the following four data points: a) two semi-structured interviews with each of the four participants in the study, b) participant-selected artifacts representative of their pedagogy and activism, c) social media content; and d) various forms of personal communication. When possible, I accompanied each participant in the field to "sites of activism" (Burstein & Montaña, 2011, p. 39). These site visits varied in location—some were sites of political activism, while other locations were used to prepare or extend the teacher activist's pedagogical work. Data from these visits were recorded in field notes and aggregated in analytic memos.

Throughout the data collection and data analysis process, member checks were conducted on an ongoing basis. I employed an anticolonial research methodology (Patel, 2014; Patel, 2016), where the production of knowledge and meaning-making was not mine alone but a "shared responsibility" (Patel, 2014, p. 360). To that end, this chapter is organized by portraits of each teacher activist to account for the unique ways in which we co-constructed their conceptions of

their pedagogical moves and activism. My methodological approach to organizing this chapter is explained further below.

A common thread connecting the four educators in this study was their disposition toward teaching. To better define “dispositions toward teaching,” I draw upon Villegas’s (2007) working definition of dispositions. According to Villegas (2007), “Dispositions are tendencies for individuals to act in a particular manner under particular circumstances, based on their beliefs” (p. 373). Using this definition, I found that all four shared common motivations for becoming educators, which provided further insight into the decisions and actions they took both inside and outside of their classrooms. All four educators in this study saw teaching as a profession that provides direction and purpose. Akin to many professions, they described teaching as a career that could provide financial security and social uplift while also affording them the unique opportunity to counter injustices and give back to communities to which they felt intricately connected. During our interactions, the educators reflected on their past experiences as youth and beginning educators, which made them feel compelled to work with students who shared a common racial, cultural, and/or linguistic status. Whether clearly articulated or deduced from our verbal and written exchanges, the educators viewed teaching and activism as inherently interconnected. Therefore, serving as a teacher activist for emergent bilingual students was not viewed as an additional task but one that was intertwined with their role as an educator. Each educator shared their unique background and experience that led them to their activist work with emergent bilingual students. Chapter 4 presents four portraits to provide rich and deep descriptions of each teacher activist’s conception of teacher activism and how those conceptions are translated into their activist work inside and outside their classrooms. Using Lightfoot’s methodology of portraiture: “a method of social science inquiry distinctive in

its blending of art and science, capturing the complexity, dynamics, and subtlety of human experience and organizational life” (<http://www.saralawrencelightfoot.com/portraiture1.html>)—each educator’s experiences and activist work are presented as a portrait. Using portraits, I attempted to present dynamic representations of how each teacher activist conceptualized their work and how these conceptions played out in and out of their classroom.

Each portrait opens with an introduction to the teacher activist and includes commentary on how the teacher activist and I began our journey of inquiry together. In one case, I justify the inclusion of a teacher activist in this study—this was the case for Kevin’s portrait. In other portraits, I explain the complexities of capturing the fullness of these teacher activists’ experiences, which were often mediated by who they were as people and the contexts that shaped who they were as educators and activists. The portraits begin with the activists’ early conceptions of teaching and activism to ascertain how the participants came to work as teacher activists. This section also provides insight into my first research question: What informs the decision-making process of teacher activists? By exploring these educators’ early conceptions of teacher activism, I gathered relevant data, such as interview transcripts and artifacts, to better address my first research question.

The remaining sections of each portrait address the pedagogical actions that each teacher activist took both in and out of their classroom. By using this organizing structure for each portrait, I attempted to make nonlinear and highly complex connections between each participant’s conceptions of teacher activism, their pedagogical decisions, and their pedagogical moves more accessible to the reader. Despite the intricacies of each participant’s activist work, all four portraits shared the same level of complexity and dynamism that made writing each portrait both challenging and intriguing to write. In many instances, the teacher activists worked

in gray, or “third spaces” (Bhabha, 2004), where their work neither began nor ended within the confines of one particular space (i.e., the classroom, the school, and the community). Within the organizing structure of each portrait, I consistently remind the reader that each portrait tells a nonlinear and , story of teacher activism shaped by the meaning-making made from interviews, field visits, collected artifacts, and frequent communication with each teacher activist. Notably, three portraits contain artifacts as evidence of the teacher activists’ decision-making and pedagogical moves, while the final portrait relies more on the reflective process of the participant. Throughout this chapter, each portrait provides insight into the decision-making processes and the pedagogical moves that were made by the four teacher activists in this study: Kevin, Glenda, Mar-y-Sol, and Jessie. The portraits were sequenced based on the teacher activists’ years of experience as teachers. Kevin’s portrait was presented first because he had just begun his teaching journey as a teaching resident at the start of this study. Jessie, on the other hand, was the most experienced teacher and teacher activist in the study, so I concluded this chapter with her portrait.

Kevin

When I first met Kevin at a local coffee shop, his personality immediately lit up the room. He is a tall, brown-skinned man, with a distinctive afro-faded hairstyle. His hair and beard were a topic of discussion because we would later laugh about the likenesses his students would draw on their dry-erase desks. Kevin was 35 when we met for our first interview. He had worked as a mentor, district-level support for male teachers of Color, a community-teaching artist/organizer, and an afterschool tutor for more than ten years. Despite all these education experiences, Kevin had never served as a classroom teacher. This was the next step for him as an “educator,” a role Kevin felt more comfortable with rather than “teacher” or “teacher activist.”

What stood out about Kevin was his passion and commitment to hip-hop and its use in education, yet he was humble about how impactful his work had been for the youth in his community. I wondered whether Kevin met the criteria of being a teacher activist for emergent bilingual youth. His work with youth in and out of the classroom was certainly aligned to the literature on teacher activists. Yet, Kevin did not intentionally engage in activism for or with EB youth—he taught and organized on behalf of all his students, many of whom were emergent bilingual learners (EBLs). As public schools become more linguistically diverse, general education teachers are being tasked with educating emergent bilingual youth within their general education classrooms. Despite this reality, many general education teachers are not being prepared to address and nurture the strengths and needs of EBL students (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Lucas et al., 2018; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Villegas et al., 2018). Unlike the three other educators in this study, Kevin did not have coursework related to teaching multilingual children. He did not come into the teaching profession with a knowledge base for teaching emergent bilingual students. Despite all these factors, Kevin still served emergent bilingual youth in ways that centered their individuality, culture, and linguistic identity. Upon reflection, I concluded that Kevin’s work with emergent bilingual youth is an important contribution to the field of education. In our culturally and linguistically rich country, countless teachers are taking up the mantle to create more liberating and humanizing spaces for young people they were not formally prepared to teach. Like Kevin, I found myself in positions of activism for my EBL students. I had no formal training in linguistics or language acquisition but at the heart of my work was my students. Throughout my time with Kevin, I found this to be true for him as well. His teaching belonged to the students and that made him a teacher activist of emergent bilingual youth. Like countless other teachers, Kevin employed caring and innovative ways to teach

students, who are often pushed to the margins of our society. It is because of Kevin's non-traditional role as a teacher activist for EBL youth that I felt his voice and his work needed to be included in this study.

“I Wouldn't Consider Myself an Activist”

Although teachers may engage in activism, they may not see themselves as activists. In fact, some educators do not consider activism to be an appropriate term to describe their practice. Borrowing from organizing structures of civil rights and other sociopolitical movements of the past (e.g., Ella Baker and SNCC, Grace Lee Boggs and her grassroots transformative justice work, and the Combahee River Collective), some educators of color may describe their work as organizing rather than activism (Dunn et al., 2017; Gist, 2016; Houchen, 2020; Pham & Philip, 2021; Au, 2021). In these organizing structures, there was not one key figure who would lead the movement. Instead, these movements espouse a collective leadership model. Ella Baker, for example, fervently proclaimed that “strong people do not need leaders” and “Give light and people will find the way” (SNCC Digital Gateway, 2018). In grassroots movements for social justice of the 21st century luminaries, such as Adrienne Maree Brown and the co-creators of the Black Lives Matter movement, continue to affirm and reimagine what grassroots activism is (Boggs, 2016 & Johnson, 2020). In other cases, educators whose work may be consistent with definitions of activism may not consider their perceptions of activism to be aligned with their work. Akin to the findings in Hung's (2018) study of twelve Taiwanese educators who engaged in social activism, we see multiple examples of educators engaging in activist work without considering themselves activists. Hung (2018) found that teachers “separated their activism from their professionalism” (p. 165) for a variety of reasons, such as societal and professional norms around the work of teachers.

Kevin was the only educator in my study who deliberately did not see himself as an activist. It is also important to note that Kevin's Black male educator identity may have also precluded him from realizing some of his goals as an educator in a traditional classroom setting. Kevin experienced the paradox of being a teacher of color in a community school. He was recruited because he was a Black male, but his Black maleness was not accepted in his school environment. I explore this contradiction in upcoming sections of this study. Kevin also shied away from being considered a teacher. He saw himself as an educator, an overarching term that he used to describe his work with young people both inside and outside of traditional classroom settings. To Kevin, teachers work within classrooms with students, but the work of educators has a broader reach. From my analysis of Kevin's interviews and artifacts, the term "educator," encompasses all forms of education, including work in the classroom. whereas the "teacher" works with students exclusively in the classroom. When asked if he would consider himself an activist, Kevin rejected that notion of his work. Instead, he described his work to elevate youth and leave a better/stronger legacy than the generations before him:

One thing I'll say is I don't look at it as activism. Even though I came into it like, yes, I want to save the babies or we're going to change the little [ones]. As time went on, it doesn't have to be so gung-ho, you know. You can learn to let things be what they are. So, I wouldn't call myself an activist [be]cause, I don't think there's any one revolution that we need to focus on or anything like that. But I do believe in the fact that the next generation is the one that's going to have to deal with whatever we leave behind. I'm all for biggin' up the youth and building them up so that they know the pitfalls and things to avoid that we went into. I'd say, "Be better and progress. Be better than us." (Kevin, personal communication, May 16, 2019)

Despite Kevin's dismissal of the term "activist" to describe his work with youth, Kevin's words, and actions, described below, are consistent with forms of social activism represented in the literature.

What Activism Is and What It Is Not

Although Kevin did not describe himself as a teacher activist, he had a lot to say about what an activist is not. Part of making sense of how Kevin viewed his work with young people was examining his definitions activism. Kevin's conception of activism was problematic for him—he used words such as "stigma," "stereotype," and "caricature" when he was asked if he saw himself as a teacher activist. For Kevin, activism was synonymous with radicalism, particularly stereotypes of Black radicalism:

I wouldn't consider myself an activist because I feel like an activist comes with, I don't want to say stigma, but comes with this stereotype, this caricature. Like you're always wearing red, black and green and you're always at these protests, and you hate anybody who's in the political arena, no matter who they are, unless they're Black. Then you gotta give them a pass until they mess up and do something anti-Black and you hate him again cause they're like an Uncle Tom. (Kevin, personal communication, May 16, 2019)

Kevin was adamant about not being viewed as what he considered to be a polarizing force in education that did not respect people's individuality. He saw the need to change education and make it a better fit for urban youth. At the same time, he did not want to become what he considered a Black radical stereotype. He wanted to respect the individualism of his students and, in turn, be respected for his unique individuality.

Besides identifying himself as an educator, Kevin deemed himself a humanist. He wanted his identity and work with young people to be inclusive rather than exclusive. This was evident

in his commentary on activism discussed in the previous section and his description of an approach to his work with a sense of openness:

I don't want to fit in that box. I've been in that box. I'm not that person. I would say I'm an educator. I'm a humanist. I'm not one for not including. Even though I directly work with, you know, Black and Brown staff and the students and families, I'm always open to anybody, you know, LGBTQ, White, whoever. If you're down to support my people, I'm a hundred percent down for you. (Kevin, personal communication, May 16, 2019)

Here Kevin defined the terms “humanist educator” as inclusionary, and “activist” as exclusionary based on his personal experiences. Taylor (2017) found that teachers who teach from a humanistic approach draw from “their own lived experiences and their instincts when they interact with and respond to children” (p. 77). For Kevin, identifying as a “humanist” and an “educator” made room for more opportunities to collaborate with other likeminded individuals across various backgrounds to nurture and educate the young people in his city. Although I continue to refer to Kevin's work as teacher activism, I honor his ways of identifying himself and his work.

Hip-Hop and Education

Kevin credited hip-hop with the development of his educational approach. This was evident in his work with an emergent bilingual third grader, David, and David's classmates, which is discussed in greater detail in the next section of this portrait. Whenever Kevin was given the opportunity to infuse and enrich the third-grade classroom, where he served as a resident teacher, with the expression and creativity of hip-hop, he did. Kevin's love of hip-hop and hip-hop pedagogy was evident throughout our discussions and time together. In fact, one of our site visits was to a hip-hop youth workshop for P-12 students held at a prominent institution

of education. In a personal reflection, Kevin shared how hip-hop culture shaped his becoming an educator and becoming a man. He wrote, “Being real was always something that I valued highly. It's part due to my upbringing in the hood and part due to my growth as a man through hip-hop culture. If you are not who you say you are, then how can one expect to have the impact they dream of?” (Kevin, personal communication, November 11, 2019). As I did more research on hip-hop and education, commonly described as hip-hop pedagogy or hip-hop based education (HHBE) (Adjapong & Emdin, 2015), I realized that who Kevin was as an educator was grounded in hip-hop as a cultural identity and the tenets of hip-hop pedagogy.

The enigmatic and revolutionary hip-hop group Dead Prez said it best: “It’s bigger than hip-hop” (Dead Prez, 2000). Kevin’s portrayal of how important hip-hop culture was to his development as a man, how it informed what he valued, and its impact on his philosophy of education, showed the power of hip-hop and hip-hop pedagogy. For Kevin, youth, and others who embrace its culture, hip-hop is more than a genre of music or art form, it is a way of life. According to seminal rapper KRS-One, hip-hop is a way to describe the collective experiences and epistemological modes of thought for urban youth and includes “nine major tenets of hip-hop: (a) Breakin' (Breakdancing); (b) Emceein' (Rapping); (c) Graffiti Art (Aerosol Art); (d) DeeJayin'; (e) Beatboxin'; (f) Street Fashion; (g) Street Language; (h) Street Knowledge; and (i) Street Entrepreneurialism” (KRS-One as cited in Bridges, 2011, p. 326). As many of the youth who were raised with the tenets of hip-hop began to find their place in education, hip-hop pedagogy and hip-hop based education became a viable response to the strengths and needs of urban youth and the educators who teach them. Paris and Alim (2017) took Ladson-Billings’ (1995) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) a step further. They called for pedagogies that were not only culturally relevant but also culturally sustaining. Hip-hop pedagogies provide

educators, especially Black and Brown educators working with youth in similar communities in which they grew up, opportunities to dismantle oppressive systems in education and offer places of hope and resistance. Kevin used hip-hop in similar ways during his teaching residency and throughout his work as a mentor and community-based educator. These examples are highlighted in the next section of this portrait.

Bridges (2011) asserted that “Hip-hop is the Black man’s negro spiritual” (p. 327). In essence, hip-hop can be seen as both a place of refuge and a source of strength for Black men. Kevin spoke frequently about how integral hip-hop was to his Black male identity and his goals as a Black male educator. It is not surprising that Black male educators, like Kevin, use hip-hop pedagogy in their classrooms to foster humanizing spaces for marginalized youth. Black male educators who live out the principles of hip-hop culture in their practice which include a call to serve one’s community, a commitment to self-actualization, the development of self-actualization in their students, and active resistance to social injustice (Bridges, 2011), innately possess the spirit of activism. Hip-hop culture was birthed out of the victories and struggles of the American Civil Rights Movement and the voices of urban youth who were not being heard. While some educators struggle to accept the political nature of teaching and learning, hip-hop educators believe that this is their purpose. They understand that hip-hop is their political voice (Bridges, 2011). Through analysis of Kevin’s interviews, correspondence, and artifacts, it was evident that Kevin’s pedagogy and activism had been shaped by hip-hop culture. Kevin’s conceptions of teacher activism, or what he would call being a “humanist educator,” grew out of his embodiment of hip-hop culture. He valued the use of hip-hop as a revolutionary tool, which was evident in the seamless inclusion of hip-hop in his classroom and his commitment to creating spaces for himself and his students to have educative spaces to be their authentic selves.

Cultural Authenticity

Kevin repeatedly expressed the importance of “keeping it real” and having his actions match his words. Johnson (2020) also found that cultural authenticity was important for Black male development. Johnson argued that Black males benefit from “authentic spaces” to support their development (p. 27). “Being real” and keeping his word were two values to which Kevin continually referred when he was asked about his work with young people both inside and outside of the classroom. Arguably, Kevin’s commitment to cultural authenticity could be seen as an impetus behind his work with urban youth. He felt accountable to his students and to their success, therefore he showed up for his students and his community in countless ways.

“If you are not who you say you are, Then how can One Expect to Have the Impact They Dream of?”

Kevin approached his role as an educator as a *duty* or a *responsibility* to minoritized communities. He valued being a man of purpose that young people could emulate. In a personal reflection Kevin wrote: “If you are not who you say you are, then how can one expect to have the impact they dream of?” This reminded me of a popular adage in the Black community, “Word is bond” or “Your word is your bond” (Kevin, personal correspondence, November 11, 2019). According to Waldman (2016), the phrase has deep roots in African American history and hip-hop culture. It became evident from my interactions with Kevin that “keeping his word” and “walking the talk” were important to him. These principles were a driving force behind Kevin’s desire to be an educator with Black and Brown youth. He made it clear in each correspondence or interaction, that he was an educator, who wanted to have a lasting impact on young Black and Brown people. His desire to be perceived as real or authentic was consistent with the findings of studies involving Black male teachers and hip-hop (Bridges, 2011; Johnson, 2020). In this

section, I unpack some of Kevin's conceptions of teaching and activism, including some of the tenets of hip-hop, that were evident in Kevin's transcripts and artifacts, as well as my field notes.

Conceptions of Teaching and Activism

Along with Kevin's beliefs about the influences of hip-hop on his identity, Kevin also placed a great emphasis on the revolutionary power of teaching young people to love themselves and their communities. He saw his role as a Black male educator as an avenue to give back to his community and provide access to young people growing and learning in the same city in which he grew up. These aspects of Kevin's beliefs about teaching and activism were apparent in his long-standing work as a community-based youth mentor/educator and his novice beginnings as a teaching resident at an urban charter school. His teacher activism stemmed from his dedication to being a man of his word and his devotion to the young people in his city.

Teaching Self-Love as a Revolutionary Act

Kevin saw fighting for justice as more than just individual development or teaching, but about helping students locate themselves in their history and their community. As a Black, Garifuna, and male educator from Creek town, a collection of small neighborhoods within a large metropolis, Kevin placed great importance on his legacy as a community member and an educator:

I can only speak from a Black educator experience. It goes hand in hand because African people were brought here through enslavement across the Diaspora. One of the things that was used to keep us in enslavement [was] education. And so, we were taught to hate our skin; we were taught to hate our hair; and we were taught to hate our noses. All our features that make us, you know, who we are. We weren't taught our legacy, which is vast and extensive. Even as a 30-year-old person, I'm still finding things like, wow, this

happened. Someone did this? I feel that teaching can be very revolutionary depending on what you're teaching, how you're teaching, and who you're teaching. (Kevin, personal communication, May 16, 2019)

Kevin appeared to be more comfortable using the word “revolutionary” or the phrase “revolutionary act” to describe his approach to teaching and learning. Teaching as revolutionary practice is integral to the work of teacher activists. Darder (2002) reflected on the work of Freire and his concept of revolutionary practice. She wrote: “To work and live coherently within the context of a revolutionary practice requires that teachers consistently think critically about what they do in their classrooms, through both individual reflection and ongoing dialogues with peers, students, and students’ parents” (Darder, 2002, p. 121). Teaching young people to learn about their origin and identities can be seen as a drastic departure from Eurocentric approaches to curriculum and pedagogy.

Being an educator for Kevin was not about amplifying one group of young people—he sought to find what made each young person unique. He took pride in celebrating the diverse ways of being students brought into a space. When describing his work with young people, he illustrated a delicate balance between honoring the rich legacy from which students come, while also amplifying this uniqueness within the classroom and other learning environments:

There's certain things you want students to know. But then there's also teaching them to be proud of themselves. It's okay that you want to wear your hair like this; that's just who you are. I could see you being like the crazy art teacher, like in fashion somewhere. You're going to be somebody great because that's who you are. Don't change because these people don't like you. And that's revolutionary, you know? (Kevin, personal communication, May 16, 2019)

Repeatedly, Kevin harkened back to the idea of appreciating where you come from but not being afraid of embracing what makes you unique. In many ways, Kevin's philosophy about balancing legacy and individuality was evident in how he saw himself and how he lived his life. It was important for Kevin to live out this belief in his words and his actions.

Teaching to Give Back and Provide Access

Kevin spoke very highly of identity, history, and legacy as attributes of his work as an educator. Kevin described working with marginalized youth as a conscious choice. When asked about his role as an educator of emergent bilingual youth, he noted that it was a role that he did not think a lot about because it did not present itself as a barrier. Kevin explained, “[Working with] bilingual youth, I would honestly say, is one of the things I don't really think about as much because it's never presented itself as a real barrier. If anything, it's made me more in touch with my own side, my own roots because I've had to be like, yeah, I'm from Guatemala.” Kevin saw the young people in his classroom as a part of his community. The students and their families were reflections of him and the communities that he loved. Therefore, the deficit-framed portraits of EBL youth did not resonate with him.

Teaching in communities that were similar to the ones Kevin grew up was important to him. He described how important he felt his role was to him and the communities that he wanted to serve as an educator. These themes of creating a legacy and being a role model, that young people can emulate were very salient in our conversations. When asked if teaching EBLs was a conscious choice:

I've intentionally only worked in inner-city neighborhoods cause I'm like, why would I go where I'm not needed, you know? *My people need me, and this is where I grew up* [emphasis added]. I grew up in neighborhoods that looked like this-have friends that grew

up in neighborhoods that looked like this. Why would I wanna turn my back to that and go somewhere where I might be the minority? I'm not knocking any educator that does that, [be]cause I know a few, but for me, if I'm going to be in education, I'm going to get back to my people because we the ones that need it. I know where we come from. I know our struggle. I know our history. So yeah, that's been a conscious effort to always work with the marginalized, underrepresented, all those, you know, fancy words that people like to throw on it. (Kevin, personal communication, May 16, 2019)

Kevin saw his role as an educator of inner-city youth as a method of giving back to his people and communities that were familiar. His connection to marginalized young people and communities was a deliberate and strategic choice. In addition to Kevin's choice to work with young people to whom he could relate, Kevin also chose to work in neighborhoods that mirrored his own because he did not want to be minoritized. Kevin was aware of his identity as a cisgender, Black, and male educator. He understood that his mere existence in education was an anomaly. In a predominantly white female profession, Kevin chose to serve as an educator where he felt like he would belong and make the greatest impact due to who he was, where he grew up, and how he came to know about the struggles and joys of Black and Brown communities. In the next section of this study, I explore how Kevin's activism or revolutionary acts were apparent in his work inside and outside traditional classroom settings.

In-Classroom Activism

Although Kevin had over ten years of experience as a youth educator, he had never been a classroom teacher. During the time of this study, Kevin was enrolled in a teacher residency program. He had served several capacities within the field of education prior to this point but this was the first time that Kevin would begin formal education to become a classroom teacher. He

aspired to get a Master of Education degree from a renowned education institution. In fact, he often published “[education college] or bust” on several of his social media posts that are featured in the next two sections of this portrait. I discuss Kevin’s experiences during his residency year in a third-grade classroom in the following section.

Hip-hop, Writing, and Third Grade

In a quaint coffee shop, we watched a video of one of Kevin’s third graders, David. David sat with one foot clinging to the stool and the other loosely hovering over the floor. Notebook in hand, he prepared to “emcee” for his classmates. As David started to rap his original piece, Mr. Kevin, as he was called by his third graders, was absent from the front of the room. Kevin shared with me that he enjoys sitting in the student’s seats and allowing them to teach him. As a true hip-hop performance, the crowd, David’s peers, and of course Mr. Kevin, were active participants in David’s performance. Between bars, you can hear “oohs” and claps from his audience. When David completed his rap, he left the stool with his composition notebook dangling from his right hand and walked back to his seat with a soft smile while his classmates applauded.

Kevin explained that David was a reluctant writer. Although he did not immediately connect that David was an EBL, he confirmed that David received English language services at his school. By using hip-hop, Kevin was able to encourage a shy and reluctant bilingual student to write an original piece and perform it in front of his entire class. In that instance, Kevin created an opportunity for David to be the teacher. David was centered as a knowledgeable contributor to the classroom, who should be heard and appreciated. Using hip-hop pedagogy, David and his peers developed a community of creativity, collaboration, and respect. Mr. Kevin supported David in developing a new persona as a writer and an orator.

So often, seasoned educators struggle to name their pedagogical moves (Ethell & McMeniman, 2000; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). This was true for Kevin. Although Kevin was not an experienced classroom teacher, he understood the connections between student voice, building community, building relationships with students, and finding the “hook” that would draw them into the content. He knew how to level the playing field for EBL students such as David. Kevin supported David in moving from reluctance, and at times complete defiance, to joyfully creating rhymes and writing poetry. David grew an affinity for writing and performing his own hip-hop masterpiece for his peers. It was Kevin’s understanding of what motivates young people to want to do their very best, that pushed David to sit with a notebook in hand to “spit his bars” for his classmates. Kevin struggled to find artifacts to share with me from his third-grade residency experience. After spending time on his social media outlets, I found numerous artifacts of Kevin’s ELA work with his third-grade students. With Kevin’s permission, I included several examples of Kevin’s pedagogical moments with his third graders during the early part of his residency.

Kevin had a keen understanding about how hip-hop and a third-grade curriculum could inform one another. I argue that it was his cultural prowess in hip-hop and his connection with students in the community that helped Kevin connect with his students. Figure 1 is an example of Kevin’s use of hip-hop to teach poetry techniques. This figure showcases a social media post (Kevin, March 1, 2019) with a written description of Kevin’s poetry lesson and his effort to make tangible connections between hip-hop artists and other contemporary writers for his students during his poetry writing unit.

Figure 1: *Kevin's Infusion of Hip-hop Pedagogy and Poetry Writing*



This was from Monday when we started our Poetry Unit in Writing. Too proud for this one as I added some life by tying the learning objectives to hip-hop songs and verses. I figure if they see the connexion between rap and poetry with more contemporary writers, they would understand the work and their world much more deeply.

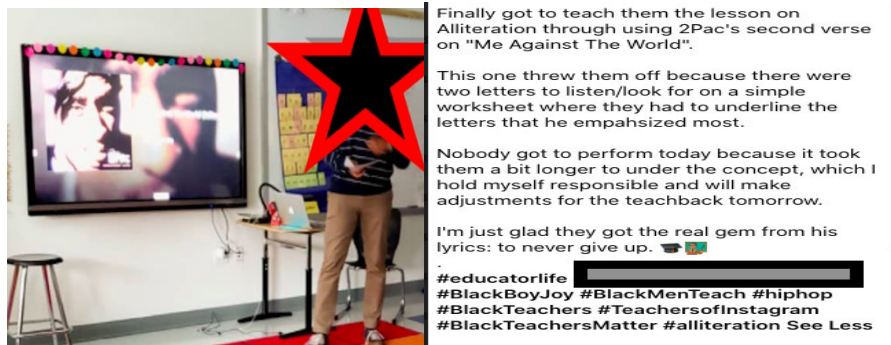
For that lesson, we studied "Parents Just Don't Understand" to discover how poets develop ideas for their work and how writing can help and relate to others.

Then a couple of my students came up to perform some more rhymes they wrote. For 3rd graders, they're pretty ill!

Glad to be around to witness this. 🎤🎶

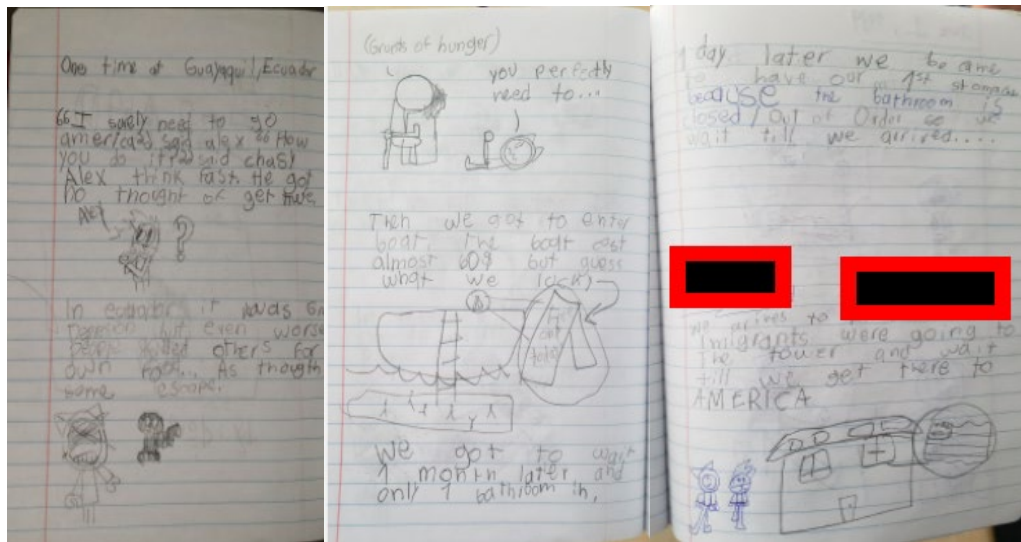
“Parents Just Don’t Understand” was a popular rap song in the late 1980s by the award-winning actor Will Smith, then widely known as The Fresh Prince, and his childhood friend and partner DJ Jazzy Jeff. Although the students might not have heard of the song due to their young age, they would recognize Will Smith and the themes of being misunderstood as a kid in that rap song. Kevin brought his objectives to help students “discover how poets develop ideas for their work and how writing can help [sic] and relate to others” to life. As educators, we work to help students meet content objectives and hope that these objectives will afford students the opportunity to apply what they have learned to the real world. In this example, Kevin was able to do this for and with his students.

In Figure 2, Kevin exemplified the second tenet of hip-hop, self-actualization (Bridges, 2011) and what other educators and teacher educators may term “reflective practice” (Schon, 1984). Kevin frequently shared that he was always learning, and he appreciated his role as a learner just as much as he valued his role as an educator. Kevin’s awareness of what the students needed to better understand the skill of alliteration and his accountability for adjusting his practice to reteach the concept the next day were examples of reflective practice and self-actualization. It is evident that Kevin’s commitment to the students’ learning was undergirded by his love of hip-hop and his students. These examples are also defining aspects of Kevin’s activism for EBL youth.

Figure 2: *Kevin Teaching Alliteration with Tupac Shakur Lyrics*

Note. Figure 2 is an artifact I found on a social media post that Kevin shared chronicling his lesson on alliteration using Tupac Shakur lyrics.

A central unit of study in many urban districts is immigration. While all EBL students are not immigrants, there are intersections of language and immigrant status for some EBL youth. It was unclear how many students in Kevin’s residency placement considered themselves or family members to be immigrants. What was evident was the infusion of a unique immigrant story at the beginning of David’s immigration writing project (see Figure 3). As David continued to write his narrative, his writing became more aligned with traditional stories of immigration from the early 20th century. These immigration stories from that time period did not include immigration stories of Central and South Americans. These glorified immigration narratives were often from those of European descent making their way to America, the new world and land of opportunity. Ghiso and Campano (2013) found that the discourse around immigration in schools can be limited. They found themes of “meritocracy, assimilation, standardization, deficit ideology, and single or reductive narratives of transformation” (p. 257). David’s writing was aligned with the writing samples that Ghiso and Campano (2013) collected. They found that even when young learners were given the opportunity to “depict an alternative history” (p. 262), most continued to produce the dominant narratives of immigration and remove their own experiences from the page. David’s writing sample showed a combination of David’s own background in the immigrant story and other storylines from text-based immigrant experiences.

Figure 3: David's Immigration Unit Writing Sample

This analysis of David's work is important because it provides the education community with an opportunity to interrogate Eurocentric curricula and design ways to educate pre-service teachers and practicing teachers to uncover the not-so-hidden curriculum for EBL immigrant students. Despite Kevin's dispositions toward revolutionary acts of teaching and providing opportunities for students to be individuals, the writing task for this immigration unit was still a location of struggle for Kevin and his students. In a social media post with Kevin and four of his students, he quoted Dr. Bettina Love and her theory of abolitionist teaching (Figure 4). It was evident that Kevin understood the tension between teaching for liberation for "dark children" and making "concessions" along the way, especially as it related to this immigration unit. These artifacts (Figures 3 and 4) provided insights into how teacher education programs and inservice professional development can better prepare general education teachers to support EBL immigrant youth in sharing their immigrant stories with the same level of complexity and security that those of dominant western European narratives receive. I conclude that with more opportunities to learn and facilitate lessons around the intersections of language and

immigration, Kevin would bring the same critical lens to the unique experiences of EBL youth as he did with his lesson on hip-hop education.

Figure 4: *Kevin's Social Media Post with Students (Not Shown) on a Field Trip*

"The ultimate goal of abolitionist teaching is freedom. Freedom to create your reality, where uplifting humanity is at the center of all decisions. And, yes, concessions will be made along the way, battles will be lost, and sometimes teachers, parents and community members will feel like they are not doing enough, but the fight is fought with the indomitable spirit of an abolitionist who engages in taking small and sometimes big risks in the fight for equal rights, liberties, and citizenship for dark children, their families, and their communities - this is fighting for freedom."

-@blovesoulpower, "We Want To Do More Than Survive"

Me and the "Ninja Turtles" (Donny, Leo, Raph and Mikey) closing our Immigration unit [redacted] looking happy and...

free. 🇺🇸 🇧🇷 🇵🇪 🇵🇪

#educatorlife [redacted]

#BlackBoyJoy See Less

Outside of the Classroom Activism

Here I focus on Kevin's vast experiences as a community-based educator and mentor for young people. Arguably, at the heart of Kevin's activism was his love of young people in his city. Kevin's contributions to the field of education are deeply rooted in the work he has done in afterschool programs, community programming, and mentoring programs. Building on what I knew about Kevin's beliefs about students and his approach to activism, I do not include explicit points of activism for EBL youth. Instead, the examples here reinforce Kevin's zeal to help all students from communities like his childhood community. Kevin's activism for EBL youth was encapsulated in his work with the youth of his city.

Kevin, the Community-Based Educator

Kevin was the only participant in the study who did not consider himself a teacher or an activist. He viewed himself as an educator. After reading the literature on community-based education spaces, Kevin's comfort with an educator identity made more sense to me. Kevin frequently described his work as an educator in community-based spaces. Despite Kevin's rejection of the word activism to define his work, Kevin's agency, and participation in forms of

social activism for education made him an important individual to learn more about in this study. Kevin shared: “Whether it was serving as a tutor and learning the importance of meeting certain graduation metrics in a grant or overseeing the placement of teachers in excess . . . I only wanted to do my best to serve the needs of children growing up in a big city like this; to give them opportunities that I did not have access to” (Kevin, personal communication, November 11, 2019). He shared that he had “worn many hats” in education, with most of Kevin’s work as educator taking place in out-of-classroom education spaces: “Becoming a classroom teacher was one I felt was a logical step in my journey after being ‘the education guy’ for so many in my circle but having this harrowing feeling of being inauthentic. I realize in hindsight that it was *moreso* [sic] external pressure due to the limited scope of what education is from those outside of the field” (Kevin, personal communication, November 11, 2019). Baldrige (2020) argued that community-based education work should receive more “legitimacy” because it serves multiple purposes in the lives of young people, especially marginalized youth groups and their families. Baldrige (2020) also asserted that “Although youth workers educate and nurture young people across many stages of development, they are rarely regarded as teachers in the traditional sense” (p. 619). Kevin’s self-described “external pressure” to become a classroom teacher and his thought process behind classroom teaching being “a logical next step” speak to the marginalization of youth workers in community-based education spaces (CBES) (Baldrige, 2020). When asked about his journey to becoming a teaching resident in his third-grade classroom, Kevin described an array of educational roles he has held over the course of his career:

I’ve worn many hats in education. Up until that point, I had done everything except be a classroom teacher, superintendent, and principal. . . Who I became as an educator was just

an extension of my curiosity, my ferocity [sic] of asking, "ooh what's this?" and wanting to learn all I could to know how I could impact student lives for the better. (Kevin, personal communication, November 11, 2019)

Kevin sought to serve young people in his city in any capacity. Kevin saw education as one of the vehicles of change he could employ to impact the lives of youth.

I used a similar process to learn more about Kevin's activism outside of traditional classroom settings; I combed through our correspondence, my field notes, and social media content to get a clearer picture of Kevin's out-of-classroom activism. Kevin was open to sharing his education work with me, but he was unaware of the magnitude of his work with young people. I postulate that Kevin's humility grounded him in his activist work with young people. During my search for artifacts, I found evidence of activism for the promotion of community care through his participation in a men's group, an abundance of youth mentoring photos over the course of many years and varying places around his city, flyers for youth-centered workshops that Kevin organized geared toward young artists and emcees, memorial posts for young people Kevin had worked with, and countless emails and posts to raise funds for community-based causes, including ending human trafficking, supporting family-based education programs, and funds for overall youth development. Throughout these experiences, Kevin centered on the needs of the young people in the community that he served, which included a vast number of EBL students; He consistently created spaces where all youth could find a place to learn, grow, and create. After asking Kevin about his work with EBL youth, he realized that many of the young people he has worked with within community-based settings were emergent bilingual youth.

A Mentor at Heart

Kevin spoke highly of his role as a mentor to youth, especially as a mentor to Black and Brown youth. Kevin prided himself on being a mentor and role model to young people. We immediately connected over our shared experiences in AmeriCorps. This organization invites youth ages 17-24 to serve a city of their choice in multiple capacities, including classroom support and afterschool programming. Kevin chose to serve the youth of his city.

Regardless of his title, Kevin found opportunities to work with Black and Brown youth in Creektown, providing tutoring and mentorship to middle schoolers in a majority emergent bilingual community. Kevin wrote a moving tribute to a student he had tutored and mentored in the past in a social media post. In the photo, Kevin and the then middle-schooler stood side by side. Kevin smiled brightly and slung his arm around the young man's neck. The short and stocky male Latinx student stood still with his hands at his sides and a serious, piercing gaze into the camera. Despite eight years passing by, Kevin's sorrowful post about this young man seemed as if they were together yesterday:

I cried all last night from sorrow and the good memories you gave me at [after school program]. I never got to tell you this, but the second verse on [song title] was about you. I was going through a really difficult time when you showed up in that basement classroom and asked me without hesitation to help you with your homework. Like I legit wasn't even on payroll yet when you asked (volun-told) me to be your tutor! [. . .] I'll never forget the moment you randomly asked me if I was proud of you as you walked out to go to your acting group and replying "always." You walked out with the biggest smile, and I sat at that plastic folding table thinking, "Damn I have a real impact on this kid." Thank

you for being the bright, loveable, charming, and determined young man you were.

(Kevin, personal communication, June 1, 2020)

This heartfelt post showcased Kevin's bond with this young man. Even though Kevin was not this young person's tutor, nor was he working at the site, the student gravitated towards Kevin and saw him as a mentor. Undoubtedly, this young man impacted Kevin, as evidenced by his social media post. Kevin valued being seen as a teacher and a learner; he shared how this student helped him through a tough time in his life. Kevin's vulnerability and willingness to support this young man exhibited his commitment to mentoring urban youth. I do not know whether this young man was an EBL when Kevin worked with him. What is important to acknowledge is that Kevin would have accepted him and nurtured him anyway.

Students as Family

One of the unique characteristics of hip-hop pedagogy specifically and culturally sustaining pedagogies as a whole is the belief that the young people educators serve are their responsibility. This accountability surpasses the "in loco parentis" status educators assume when students are present in school. Instead, culturally sustaining educators embrace the notion that students in their communities are an extension of their families. This familial responsibility to young people is also present in many CBES due to the direct connection to the community in which they reside. Kevin also embodied this belief in his mentoring capacities. Kevin wrote a social media post (Figure 5) to culminate his five years of mentoring work with a city high school program. About 10% of the students were classified as English Language Learners. Kevin shared his gratitude to the young people and his colleagues he had worked with within a mentoring program for five years. He refers to this group as an "extension of his family."

Figure 5: *Kevin's Post of Gratitude to his Family-Like Mentoring Community*

2020.

Yesterday was one of the most beautiful days of my life. This is by far the strongest group of students, mentors, parents I've ever met. Despite a pandemic and turbulent racial climate, we stuck together and succeeded. College acceptances, awards and scholarships, and a lot of joy on that Zoom call. My mother even got to see this extension of family for the first time.

Thank you all for this year. Thank you all for these last five years. I am great because you are. 🙏💙❤️

Kevin joyfully recounted how proud he was to share this “extension of family” with his mother for the first time. Kevin’s pride and gratitude for this group of people showed the importance of belonging to this community for the young people and himself. As Kevin mentioned in his post, there were obstacles, but the group overcame them and succeeded due to the strength of this “extended family” in the form of a youth-based mentoring program. Being an educator was more than work for Kevin—it was his joy. The final section of Kevin’s portrait explores why joy was central to Kevin’s work as an educator engaged in activism and vital to his identity as a Black man.

#Blackboyjoy

A popular hashtag currently circulating on social media platforms is titled #BlackBoyJoy. Historically, Black boys have been viewed and treated as adults. Their childhood and innocence are both figuratively and literally stolen from them. Whether we are reliving the horrifying mutilation and murder of fourteen-year-old Emmett Till or watching twelve-year-old Tamir Rice gunned down by law enforcement, there is no escaping that Black male bodies are morosely depicted in society. Young (2017) proclaimed, “#BlackBoyJoy presents a teachable moment to social media that allows us to reclaim the innocence of black boyhood” (www.theroot.com). Despite Kevin’s obstacles in becoming and continuing his work as an educator, he did not refrain from being vulnerable and sharing his full humanity with his students. Rarely are Black men

depicted as educators, let alone educators who laugh, cry and express emotions of love and compassion for their students. Kevin continues to do all these things for and with Black and Brown urban youth.

It felt appropriate to end Kevin's portrait by calling attention to Kevin's joy in being a teacher. Very rarely is joy explored as a reason to teach, especially a reason to teach Black and Brown youth. Kevin took every opportunity to express the pride and joy he felt about being a Black male educator. Kevin aspired to make "education look cool" (Kevin, personal communication, November 19, 2019). He also wrote that he "found passion and joy in talking about education" despite never having "worn those shoes of being in a classroom every day" (Kevin, personal communication, November 19, 2019). In a climate where teaching and learning can be political and polarizing, remembering that joy is at the center of teaching and desiring the best for our students is a welcoming idea. When asked what grade Kevin taught in his residency placement, he did not simply respond "third grade"— instead, he proudly exclaimed, "Third-grade teacher and proud!" Kevin's "Black boy joy" emanated from him every time we met. Being an educator of urban youth, including emergent bilingual youth, was Kevin's pride, joy, and source of coolness. Kevin's authenticity to himself, his students, and his community exemplify the pressing need for Black male teachers like him. Regardless of Kevin's feelings about what activism is or is not, his love and care for the young people in his city and his facilitation of hip-hop pedagogies with EBL students in the classroom are defining qualities of a teacher activist. Kevin's activism conveyed the importance of having Black male educators with deep-rooted connections to the community and culture of many young people in our public schools.

Glenda

What does it mean to learn how to teach while simultaneously learning how to be a teacher activist? When I met Glenda, she was learning and understanding how to do both things. Glenda's story is complex, as understanding the process of learning to teach is a difficult task. In addition to the multifaceted phenomena of learning to teach, understanding how one becomes a teacher activist and what that becoming entails is a whole other feat. I found it uniquely challenging to write Glenda's portrait. Her self-identification and work as a teacher activist for emergent bilingual students met the parameters of the study. Yet trying to capture how Glenda came into teaching and conceived herself as a teacher activist was much more complex. Glenda's nonlinear development of her identity as a public-school dual-language teacher and her identity as a teacher activist intersected at various points of Glenda's life and experience. Finally, as a qualitative researcher, I brought my own subjectivities to my research. Meeting Glenda for this study made me confront some of my own preconceptions and insecurities surrounding race, class, language, and opportunity. Despite these challenges, Glenda's portrait attempts to capture how a novice public school teacher makes sense of what it means to teach emergent bilingual youth and act as a teacher activist.

Glenda and I met at a train station on a hot summer day. The plan was to meet at a community-favorite cafe before Glenda had to catch another train to visit her parents. Although it was our first time meeting in person, Glenda felt like an old friend. She and I both shared excitement about this study, although mine was partly nervous excitement about finally beginning the interview process with her. Glenda shared her anticipation of having someone to talk to and process with around her teaching and activism work. Later in our initial interview, we realized that we enjoyed talking about language and power. At first, I was worried about our interview as Glenda and I came from what I perceived as two different worlds. She was a

younger White woman from an affluent background, and I am a Black woman from a working-class family. I was surprised by how this stuck out to me. The other three participants in the study shared what I felt were commonalities— like being Black or being raised in a working-class family. Glenda’s initial interview was my first experience navigating my own positionality in the field as a novice qualitative researcher; this dynamic relationship will be explored further in Chapter 5.

Conceptions of Teacher Activism

Because Glenda’s first interview corresponded with the conclusion of her first school year, it was essential to show how Glenda’s conceptions of activism evolved from the time that we met to our final correspondence one year later. By the end of her second year of teaching in an urban school, Glenda had taken on more roles in her school community, her school district, and her city’s teachers union. These experiences and Glenda’s being a new teacher helped shape her evolving teacher activism conceptions. This section of Glenda’s portrait will explore Glenda’s early conceptions of teacher activism and the origins of those beliefs.

“To be a Teacher, I Inherently Need to be an Activist”

At the start of her initial interview, Glenda shared her belief about the interconnectedness of teaching and activism. Despite being unclear about what teaching or activism meant, Glenda saw these two identities as complementary. Glenda’s disposition toward teacher activism as a first-year teacher was one that I had rarely encountered. Glenda explained, “I’m trying to be a teacher, and I think that through trying to be a teacher, I inherently must be an activist, I guess. I don’t really know what defines an activist, but I see that the work of trying to be a teacher involves a lot of the things that I think are the same as what typically gets seen or at least my vision of [activism] (Glenda, personal communication, July 21, 2019). It was evident that Glenda

saw herself as a teacher activist. Locating how she developed this conception of the teacher as *activist* was more complex to understand.

Love of Language and Language Teaching

Glenda expressed a love of language and teaching others about language and culture. Glenda is multilingual— she speaks English, Chinese, Hebrew, Portuguese, and Spanish. Second to English, Spanish is the language with which she feels most comfortable. Glenda described her ease with speaking Spanish in a unique way:

I speak Spanish fluently. I feel bilingual [in Spanish] to the point that I have a personality. I know myself in that language. . . Except for Portuguese, I was taught formally in the school setting, but I didn't get a personality in Spanish until I moved to Spain. I lived in Peru and Spain for a while, and that was for the purpose of me finally getting better at this language that I have been studying for so long (Glenda, personal communication, July 21, 2019).

From childhood, Glenda was exposed to multiple languages. Growing up in a Jewish household, Glenda attended a private Jewish day school until the 8th grade. She recalled spending half of her day being instructed in English and the other half in Hebrew. After transferring to another private school in 9th grade, Glenda studied Chinese and Spanish, continuing with Spanish language studies through college. Although she received her BA in English, Glenda's ambitions for teaching ENL students grew out of her experiences living in different countries. During her time abroad, Glenda taught English in various contexts post-graduation before deciding to become a full-time elementary school teacher in Old City. Glenda acknowledged that she had a "personality" in Spanish, which provides evidence for her deep connection between language

and personal identity. In essence, Glenda's language identity was uniquely tied to who she was as an individual (Norton, 2010).

Dynamic Development of Teacher Activism

Glenda described her choice to become a teacher as one that would provide her with a sense of purpose and stability. Teaching presented Glenda with the opportunity to settle into a career that she felt would be meaningful:

Since college, I was not really knowing [sic] what I wanted to do. I wanted to do something I cared about. So, deciding to be a teacher as a career path choice felt very much like a practical profession to settle into; [I] needed to have something back then because [I was] floating around and getting little jobs here and there. (Glenda, personal communication, July 21, 2019)

Coupled with her desire to make a difference, Glenda had a love of language and language teaching. Glenda described coming from an affluent suburban background where she was provided the opportunity to travel and become multilingual. This dissonance between the privilege that Glenda had as an affluent, White woman of Jewish descent and her marginalized status as a new teacher of predominantly Black and Brown emergent bilingual students provided the tapestry for the meaning-making of Glenda's conceptions of teaching and activism. The dynamic ways that race, class, privilege, lived experiences, and hegemony shaped how Glenda conceptualized who she was as a teacher activist of EBLs.

In some ways, being a White woman from a privileged background may have supported or encouraged Glenda in believing that she could make a difference in the lives of her students. At the same time, being a new teacher in Old City public schools meant that she would face obstacles and newfound challenges that she might not have encountered before this experience.

Glenda shared how her role as a teacher gave her a sense of connectedness to the conditions her students were facing and how her work as a teacher assisted her in facing her own privilege.

Because she was a highly educated White woman from an affluent family, she conveyed that she did not have the same struggles as her students. By becoming a teacher, Glenda began to look inwardly at herself and outwardly at what she could do to make a difference in the lives of her students:

This is the first time in my life where I've felt connected enough to any cause both because I'm in it and see it, and because it directly impacts me. You know, I grew up White, with a family with money, highly educated. I did not come up against a lot of anything. I felt like this is my cause. There's definitely a lot of tension around this cause [because it] isn't my own. I know it's not. I'm not the one that's the most directly impacted by it, but this is something that I'm interested in and is where my mind and heart is. It's become my own in a much realer [sic] way than anything else that I can just engage with over the course of my life. So, I would say this is my first time feeling like I've been vaguely involved in activist-type things before. This is the first time where it feels authentic in any kind of sustainable path. (Glenda, personal communication, July 21, 2019)

Glenda communicated her reasons for being a teacher activist for her predominantly Black and Brown emergent bilingual youth and the tensions she experienced in joining in this struggle. The push and pull between opportunities that Glenda has had due to her race and class privilege are starkly different from the access that her students were afforded in their education and linguistic development. I will explore further how power, language, and access intersect in Chapter 5.

In Classroom Activism

I noted how Glenda saw activism and teaching as inherently related in the previous section of this chapter. She shared how she saw teaching as a profession with a purpose or cause that she felt was worth fighting for. In addition to these factors, I found that Glenda participated in activism as means of survival as a new teacher. This theme is consistent with findings in the literature on teacher activism and sustaining teachers' well-being (Stern & Brown, 2016). At the start of the study, Glenda was completing her first year of classroom teaching in Old City and was also entering her second year of teaching as a union co-building rep. Glenda described a feeling of isolation as a dual-language teacher, which would influence her decision to seek opportunities for reflection, community, and ways to promote social and linguistic justice for her minoritized dual-language students both in and out of the classroom.

Glenda provided rich examples of how she used culturally sustaining pedagogies in her dual-language classroom. The artifacts and detailed descriptions of how and why Glenda made certain pedagogical decisions in her classroom were aligned with theories of culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy in the literature (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Lee, 2010; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). Notably, she facilitated intergenerational teaching and learning opportunities for and with her students, provided students with texts and tasks centered on students' language(s) and culture(s), and supported the promotion of student discourse about content in her dual-language classroom.

Glenda's Dual-language Classroom

As a new teacher, Glenda knew she had a lot to learn about teaching her first-grade dual-language class. Despite her newness to being a dual-language teacher, she found opportunities to center her students' cultural and linguistic identities within her classroom by implementing authentic texts and learning experiences. Glenda also aspired to teach her students to be problem

solvers and knowledgeable others to their peers. Examples of these pedagogical choices will be discussed further in this portrait section.

Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Pedagogies

In our second interview, Glenda shared some artifacts she had collected from the first half of the school year. Some of the most intriguing artifacts originated from her first-grade unit study of Honduras. Rather than following the lead of her grade level, Glenda decided that she and her students would do more than pay lip service to Hispanic Heritage Month, but that she and her students would use this opportunity to develop both their literacy skills and cultural prowess:

My principal [had] a little hesitation around Hispanic Heritage Month and Black History Month, [saying] they shouldn't be confined to the one month, and I agree with that. That would've been my analysis before coming to a school. But when you see a school that's just straight up, like not culturally responsive period [then] at least [these months are] a place to start. It's a place where teachers who are not comfortable teaching these things can get their feet wet and try to show as a school; we're going to talk about this. And we're going to value it. (Glenda, personal communication, October 20, 2019)

Glenda acknowledged that the principal's viewpoint was an attempt at culturally responsive pedagogy, but she did not believe it was enough. She argued, "To me, I feel like it's a cop-out to say it shouldn't be just one month. I'm like, okay, but you're not doing it, period. So, if you're not gonna do it elsewhere, this [Hispanic Heritage Month] was a perfect place to start (Glenda, personal communication, October 20, 2019). Based on Glenda's belief that the school's approach was more like a "cop-out" than a real attempt at honoring students' heritages, it appears that

Glenda used this project as an opportunity to do meaningful, culturally relevant work rather than a superficial nod to National Hispanic Heritage Month.

The Classroom as a Space for Shared, Intergenerational Learning

Glenda's unit about Honduras also exemplified her willingness to tap into the school community's cultural capital and her openness to intergenerational learning. Jaffe-Walter and Lee (2018) found that: "In contrast to the deficit approaches to immigrant education, asset-based perspectives view students' cultures, languages, identities, and communities as valuable resources (p. 262). Glenda's Honduras unit study utilized primary sources from the nontraditional source material. Three older cousins of one of Glenda's first graders came to her classroom and spoke to her students. These experts were not adults or teens—they were upper-elementary students in the same school who volunteered to share their knowledge and experiences about being Honduran. The three older children were positioned as instructional contributors to Glenda's classroom. Glenda saw her first grader and his older relatives as meaningful and authentic resources of cultural knowledge. She saw these young people as co-teachers for this unit, who had a wealth of knowledge and experiences from which she and her students could benefit. Glenda arranged with the older students' teachers for them to leave their homerooms and come down for their instructional talk with her first graders. Glenda reflected on the implementation of the project the previous year and how she wanted to make the project more meaningful for her students in the current school year:

This is what they had done in the past for Hispanic Heritage Month. Each grade had gotten a country, and they were supposed to decorate their bulletin boards or something according to what they learned; it just felt like last year. Last year, everything was a mess for me but I don't think the other classes did much more than color the flag of El

Salvador. I'm like, that's it? So, this year, there was more energy around our first-grade class [topic], Honduras; and we have a student in our classroom [from] Honduras. So, I said, "[student's name], you're about to be the star!" (Glenda, personal communication, April 13, 2020)

Figure 6 shows the task description for the research Glenda's first graders conducted by interviewing their classmate's older Honduran cousins. In addition to welcoming students' home languages, this artifact exemplifies how Glenda invited her students and the older children to see themselves as teachers and Glenda as a student. There was a shared sense of power and a shift in whose knowledge should be privileged. This artifact supports Glenda's use of culturally sustaining pedagogy to ensure students had a clear understanding that knowledge is shared and owned by everyone in the learning community and that Spanish is a valued language in their classroom. This artifact also illustrates how Glenda tapped into her immigrant students' transnational knowledge by resisting deficit conceptions of youth and positioning them as carriers of knowledge (Jaffe-Walter & Lee, 2018).

In Figure 7, the data from the students' research about Honduras was displayed in drawings, labels, and captions. There was evidence of inventive spelling, which signals students' willingness to take risks and worry less about the accuracy of their spelling and more about the quality of their content. Above the task description, on the left-hand side, is a two-page writing piece co-authored by her students' cousins, the older children interviewed by Glenda's first-grade students, and adult members of their family. This artifact exhibited evidence of process writing, interviewing skills, research skills, data collection, and the use of primary and secondary sources. In a neoliberal education environment emphasizing standardization and monolingual English use, Glenda and her students demonstrated the power of centering students' questions,

knowledge, and identities in the classroom. This artifact also lends credence to the use of students' home language(s) and culture(s) in the dual-language classroom. When students are classified as poor, Black, Brown, and ELL, their access to rich, interdisciplinary learning is often sidelined for more teacher-centered, rote content instruction, typically delivered in English. I wondered about the students' level of engagement and productivity in this unit due to the cultural and linguistic connections students could make, so I asked Glenda if she saw a difference in how her students approached the task because the project was about Honduras or their classmate. Glenda reported she had seen a difference in her first-graders; she found them to be more intrinsically motivated by the method of using interviews rather than books for this project. Glenda stressed the value of books for her young learners, but she also emphasized how powerful the use of oral language was for her students during this project:

I think it felt more immediate—the things they would be learning about. They were the ones coming up with the questions, and the answers were things that somebody in the room knew, and it wasn't coming from some book, and it wasn't coming from the teacher. I think it takes a while to develop the curiosity of like, oh, I could learn something in a book; that's just so abstract . . . It's like when you're little, you learn about things by talking to people and asking questions about what you see. I think that I just saw more because it was more sustained investigation of something more concrete.

(Glenda, personal communication, April 13, 2020)

Some of the words that stood out to me from Glenda's response were "immediate," "curiosity," and "investigation." Glenda took a project that could have potentially been a surface-level task for her students and made it purposeful for them. She fostered the immediacy of the unit by

considering her students' interests, strengths, and the age-appropriateness of the unit activities. Glenda's facilitation of this Honduras unit made Hispanic Heritage Month more than a formality for her young people. She created space for Hispanic heritage to become a privileged curriculum that her students required advanced proficiency to master.

Figure 6: *Glenda's Task Description for the Honduras Unit*

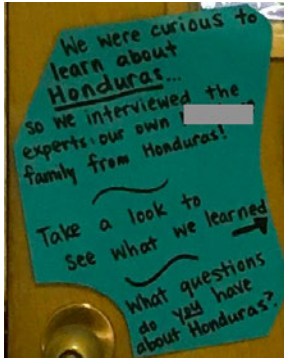


Figure 7: *Student Work from Honduras Unit Displayed on Glenda's Classroom Door*



Additive Bilingualism

In Glenda's first-grade dual-language classroom, there was an emphasis on embracing students' home languages and cultures. Following her first graders' unit on Honduras, Glenda encouraged her students to thank her student's cousins and extended family for teaching the class

about Honduran culture. Figure 8 illustrates a student-generated thank you card from Glenda's class to her student and their family. It is important to note that the students wrote their thanks in Spanish rather than English, highlighting Glenda's commitment to honoring students' home languages and cultures. Additionally, students were not prompted to write their responses in both English and Spanish. Instead, there is evidence of support in helping students write the thank you card using grammatical and syntactical structures in the Spanish language, which signaled her commitment to encouraging student learning in Spanish and English.

Figure 8: *A Thank You Card Written by Glenda's Students to Their Classmate and his Family*



Use of Culturally and Linguistically Relevant Texts

In Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet tries to downplay the powerful connections between names and lineage when she wondered, "What's in a name? That which we call a rose/By any other name would smell as sweet" (Shakespeare, 1597/2020). In this example, the wealthy and noble-born couple would like to separate themselves from power and status. In many low-income EBL classrooms, students' names, histories, and cultures are often disregarded with the perception that they hold limited power and status. Like Romeo and Juliet, whose deaths were caused by their names and social position, EBLs often experience what Dr. Bettina Love (2019) coined "spirit-murdering." Love contended that "dark students" experience trauma from racism and other intersectional forms of oppression that murders the spirit (pp. 38–39). Many EBL students are forced to change their names or remain silent when they are mispronounced.

This form of erasure of students' identities can be seen as another form of spirit-murder. Glenda and a colleague disrupted this classroom injustice by creating a literacy unit to learn about their students and celebrate their uniqueness, including a celebration of their names.

At the start of the school year, they collaborated to create a home-school connection through their project on the origins of their students' names (see Figures 9 and 10). After a read-aloud of an English/Spanish picture book *René has Two Last Names*, they engaged the students and their families in a literacy practice that would allow Glenda to learn more about her students and their families. This task also sent an unwritten message that who the students are and what their families have to offer would be integral to their learning throughout the year. Glenda expressed concern about carefully crafting such a task, which would require parental involvement and some form of family history that some students may not have or know. She shared how she toiled over the questions and how she would create space for students whose families may have difficulty completing the project for an array of circumstances: being adopted, family separation, or lack of a story behind the child's name. Although Glenda was worried about whether the project was responsive to the needs of all her students' families, it was positively received by the students and their caretakers. Glenda's inclusion of a bilingual picture book whose main character was Brown and a bilingual speaker with two hyphenated last names (common in Latinx families) exemplified Glenda's commitment to culturally relevant pedagogy and a continuous push to promote a classroom where knowledge is shared and co-constructed.

Figure 9: *Spanish and English Parent Letter for Name Origins Project*

Queridas familias,

Esta semana en el [redacted], leímos el cuento *René tiene dos apellidos*. En este cuento, un niño joven explica a su clase cómo sus dos apellidos representan dos lados de su familia.

¡Esperamos que su hijo/a explique su nombre a nuestra clase!

1. Escribir su nombre en letras grandes y nítidas
2. Dibujar, escribir o pegar fotos alrededor de su nombre para responder a algunos de las siguientes preguntas:

- ¿Quién escogió tus nombres y por qué los escogió?
- ¿Con quién compartes un nombre?
- ¿Tienes apodos?
- ¿Qué significan tus nombres?

¡Las familias están invitadas a participar en las presentaciones de los proyectos el jueves, 10 de octubre de 2:15 - 3pm!

Gracias,

Dear Families,

This week in [redacted], we read a story called *René has two last names*, where a young boy tells his class how his two last names represent two sides of his family.

Your child is encouraged to tell our class about their name!

Please help your child to:

1. Write their full name in large, clear letters.
2. Draw pictures, write, or paste photos around their name to answer some of the following questions:

- Who chose your names and why did they choose them?
- Who do you share a name with?
- Do you have nicknames?
- What do your names mean?

Families are invited to participate in our project presentations on Thursday, October 10th from 2:15 - 3pm!

Thank you,

Moving from Teacher-Centered Approaches to Student-Centered Approaches to Learning and Classroom Management

Research on novice teachers tells us that many novice teachers resort to less student-centered learning when they feel they do not have adequate “control” of their classrooms (Bosch, 2006; Lew & Nelson, 2016; Putnam, 2009). Glenda was candid with me about her struggles in managing her classroom and the problems that impacted her students' lives. She felt incredibly challenged by the types of communication she was having with her students as well as the types of exchanges students were having with one another:

I'm saying it would've been the ideal . . .that's the kind of communication that I would've wanted is like, you listen to me because you know that we need to listen to grown-ups for safety reasons or whatever. Also, know that you're not only listening to me, but I'm also listening to you. That's the ideal understanding that I would have wanted with my kids, but instead, I was just saying these words over and over and over again on top of this foundation that didn't actually exist. . .That placeholder [repeated words] never represented any real foundation that it could have. It could have had another meaning if we had that shared understanding. But instead, it was just like this placeholder of a set phrase that kept coming out of my mouth with the idea that maybe, if I say it enough times, they'll get it, you know? And none of us were convinced. So that feels different this year. (Glenda, personal communication, October 20, 2019)

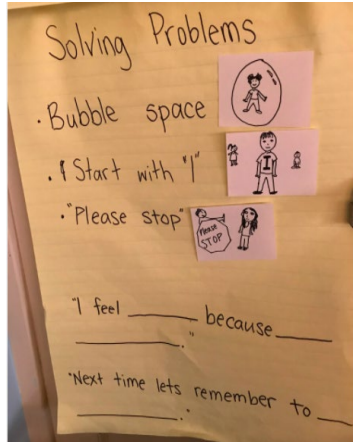
Glenda saw her students as problem solvers. She expressed the desire to have her young learners use their words to express their feelings, wants, and needs. She noted that her students would often use less productive ways of solving problems, such as tattling to the teacher or lashing out at one another either verbally or physically:

This year, I have a different approach to repeating myself where yes, I'm using some set phrases, and yes, I'm hoping that if I say things enough times they will be understood. But I'm not just saying them for the sake of saying it. It feels like I'm saying them as part of this communicative process. I have more comfort about repeating myself because I understand that I have to repeat myself because you're six years old and I'm going to repeat myself all year long and I don't need to be upset about it. I feel like last year, I would be upset when I had to repeat myself. I'd be like, "but didn't I just say..." [Now] it's just like, I'm gonna say it again. (Glenda, personal communication, October 20, 2019)

Figure 10 showcases a chart of discussion prompts and corresponding visual images Glenda provided to her students. Students were given restorative prompts, such as "I statements," to express their feelings to one another when harm has occurred. They are also provided with sentence starters to help them communicate to their peers how they would like to be treated in the future. Glenda had also planned opportunities for the students to use these strategies to communicate with one another and solve problems without an adult's interference. Glenda's approach to managing students' conflicts was the antithesis of traditional notions of classroom management, where extrinsic punishments and rewards are the primary sources of conflict resolution. On the contrary, Glenda's use of discussion prompts, and role-playing afforded her

young people authentically humanizing experiences to express their concerns and repair relationships with their peers.

Figure 10: *Glenda's Conflict Resolution Anchor Chart: Solving Problems*



Developing Academic Language

There is a preponderance of literature that emphasizes the importance of acquiring academic language and academic discourse in a new language (Bunch, 2010; Schleppegrell, 2012; Schulze, 2015). Glenda explained how she wanted her students to be able to respond to one another and not just her. She expressed her frustration with students directing their questions and comments solely to her. She wanted to create a classroom environment where students engage in more student-to-student discourse. Figure 11 illustrates an academic discourse chart entitled “Talk Moves” that Glenda planned to use with her students. During our interview, she acknowledged that she had yet to implement it with her whole class, but it was something that she wanted to try with her students. Reflecting on her previous year as a first-year classroom teacher, Glenda realized that she was repeating the same practices and unable to see changes in how her students responded to one another. As a new teacher, Glenda was cognizant that she would continue to make mistakes as she learned alongside her students. This artifact represents Glenda's orientation toward fostering student-centered learning and her commitment to improving her practice through reflection.

Figure 11: *Talk Moves Anchor Chart*

If you included _____ your explanation would be more clear.

I don't understand _____. Can you please explain?

I understand _____, but can you please help me understand _____?

Your explanation would be a little bit clearer if _____.

I agree (with _____) because _____.

I think differently (than _____) because _____.

I am revising my thinking because _____.

I know my answer is right because _____.

The main idea is _____.

A key detail that helps me understand is _____.

How to explain without telling the answer

Story problems:
 What are the quantities? What are the units?
 What math questions could we ask about this situation? [having read through the situation 3x without the question posed]

Out of Classroom Activism

In addition to fostering culturally and linguistically relevant learning spaces for her dual-language students, Glenda was actively engaged in mobilizing with other dual-language teachers across her school district, serving as a co-building union representative for the district's teachers' union. She also played an active role in the union's caucus, a smaller contingency of union members. In this section and Jessie's forthcoming portrait, I make a clear delineation between the more corporate teacher unionism and grassroots teacher unionism that is often enacted within caucuses. The traditional teacher's union model has been the dominant representation model for unionized public school teachers. There is a top-down organizational structure, with those with more political influence at the top of the hierarchy. Grassroots teacher unionism has a different approach. Often referred to as "movements of rank-and-file educators" with a focus on "bread and butter" issues (Peterson, 2015; Weiner, 2012) and "bargaining for the common good" (Glenda, personal communication, February 1, 2022), the caucuses within the larger teachers' union is led by practicing teachers for practicing teachers, as opposed to individuals who may or may not have direct connections to the classroom. The caucus leaders aim to gain political power, but their pursuits are geared toward participation in making changes at the school and

district levels. Their political action is cultivated and directed toward directly impacting the communities in which their schools are housed. Many of the country's teachers' unions have had a history fraught with racist and discriminatory practices; minority caucuses emerged as factions of larger teachers' unions in response (Peterson, 2015; Weiner, 2012). Jessie and Glenda were active in both their teachers' unions and the more social justice-focused caucuses in their respective cities; their participation in these organizations was critical aspects of their teacher activism.

Teacher Preparation and Grassroots Teacher Activism

Glenda's initial exposure to teacher activism did not come from her teacher education program coursework. Instead, she described her interactions with individuals and groups as a means of learning about teacher activism and developing as a teacher activist herself:

I might be completely blanking, but I can't think of any models of teacher activists from my coursework itself. However, my grad program did occasionally host events where alum, currently working as teachers, came to talk with us; and so, through those panels/events, I was able to meet a few members of the union caucus and the Education Activist Network (EAN). [I heard] about the activism they were involved in, which was going on in the city. I attended an EAN conference/workshop in the spring right before graduating and was very inspired by the educators, students, and families I learned from there. It felt like a hub of possibility; I was so grateful to know there was this large network of people with deep roots fighting so many crucial fights. (Glenda, personal communication, March 2021)

Here, Glenda notes how her introduction gave her inspiration and hope for fighting injustice in the city where she was about to work. This network of activists would later become a resource as she developed her teacher activism during her first two years of teaching.

Student Teaching Mentorship and Development of Activism

Upon further reflection, Glenda recollected how her clinical teaching experience contributed to her conceptions of teacher activism:

I also want to mention that my mentor teacher when I was student teaching was a big influence on me when it comes to activism. While she was not involved in any formal organizing as far as I could tell, she considered herself an advocate and modeled for me and explained to me how she fought for what she and her students needed in the dual-language class at the school level. *I learned from her that “being professional” doesn’t just mean nodding and going along with whatever a supervisor says, and that, in many instances, it is an educator’s responsibility to push back when the mandates come without the necessary support or without taking into consideration students’ real needs* [emphasis added]. (Glenda, personal communication, March 2021)

In this recollection of her student teaching experience and her mentor teacher’s advocacy for herself and her students, Glenda was able to form a more critical lens for teaching. Notably, Glenda alluded to a shift in her understanding of professionalism in teaching. She learned the multifaceted nature of teacher professionalism, especially when teaching student populations that are often marginalized. Glenda observed how enacting teacher advocacy, and teacher agency can be catalysts for teacher activism. Like the model of teacher activism I described in Chapter 2, Glenda acknowledged the absence of “formal organizing,” which is often a defining

characteristic of teacher activism. Still, she did express how her mentor teacher's advocacy influenced her conceptualization of teacher activism.

Grassroots Organizing and Teacher Activism for Survival

As a new teacher, Glenda felt very isolated from other educators of emergent bilingual learners, who shared similar experiences and had a socially just mindset for teaching. Because of this isolation, Glenda tried to find ways to build a community of educators for herself. Glenda expressed the need to find a connection between herself and her students. Through the mobilization of other dual-language teachers, students, and families, Glenda created a community for herself with the hopes of continuing her career as a teacher of EBLs in her district. Glenda used her role as a teacher activist to find and develop relationships with other educators. These connections can be thought of as a means for Glenda to persevere and garner support for herself under extremely difficult and emotionally challenging working conditions. Glenda's activism on the school and community level helped her survive as a teacher in Old City.

Isolation of Dual-language Classroom Teachers and Students

During our conversations, Glenda often spoke about how isolating it was for her as a dual-language teacher in her school because of the limited number of similar teachers. Outside of the occasional district-level meetings, dual-language teachers across the district rarely had spaces to meet and discuss concerns that were unique to their roles and the needs of their emergent bilingual students. Dual-language classrooms are literally and figuratively minoritized in predominantly Black, Brown, and poor public schools. Schools have long been the battleground for social and political issues in the United States. The dual-language classrooms that are composed of students who are labeled "ELLs" or students with "limited English proficiency"

serve as a microcosm of the larger society's approach to immigration, race, language, and class (Varghese & Snyder, 2018). These identity markers often serve as gatekeepers for who has the right to be considered bilingual or multilingual. According to Larsson (2016), "A monoglossic ideology considers monolingualism as the norm in society" (p. 6). Akin to the neoliberal perspectives of who should benefit from dual-language instruction and what the target language of instruction should be based on a student's raciolinguistic identity, Glenda faced a monoglossic framework that privileged English as the preferred target language for her students. The dissonance between what she knew her students needed and what they deserved versus the messaging from the school and the district that preserving and nurturing students' home languages and English was an isolating experience in and of itself.

Mobilizing With the Dual-language Community

In an earlier section, Glenda shared how her mentor teacher modeled advocacy for herself and her students during her clinical year. Glenda also pointed out that her mentor teacher did not do any formal organizing. Formal organizing appeared to be a necessary step for Glenda to realize her role as a teacher activist. One of the ways in which Glenda decided to enact the organizing component of teacher activism was to work towards mobilizing all stakeholders in the district's dual-language community and other like-minded educators. This alliance would include other dual-language educators, dual-language families, and students in dual-language classrooms:

It was like five or six of us, but we planned to be at the school board meetings, and one of my friends got a few parents and students to go to the school board meetings; Then, we got in touch with one of the school board members, and we got a meeting with the school board member. We brought a list of the dual-language program issues. We were heard by

two school board members. It formed with the idea [that] we need a middle school option for dual-language-[be]cause right now, it stops at fifth grade. (Glenda, personal communication, October 20, 2019)

Glenda's description of her work in mobilizing the district's dual-language community is reflective of her conceptions of a teacher activist. To provide a deeper understanding of the work she and her colleagues undertook in advocacy for a more robust and comprehensive dual-language program, Glenda provided me with a copy of the dual-language policy demands created by the team. Figure 12 outlines the demands Glenda and other dual-language educators planned to bring before the district. This document shows how Glenda's teacher activism for her emergent bilingual students helped bring the dual-language community together and pushed the policy agenda of those frequently overlooked and pushed aside to the forefront.

Figure 12: *Dual-language Policy Demands Created by Glenda and her Dual-language Colleagues*

- Intro/Summary:**
 We are a group of passionate Dual Language educators who have come together to advocate for Dual Language programs in the [redacted] District. We are hoping to engage [redacted] stakeholders at all levels in conversations about how to strengthen and grow our district's Dual Language Programs. We believe we are starting from a strong foundation with families, students, teachers, and administrators who value DL and use the resources available to them in order to provide the best Dual Language Instruction possible to the communities of [redacted]. We are proud of the work we do and only want to make it better!
- Below please find a list of goals for Dual Language Programs for the [redacted], rooted in our knowledge of best practices, research, and experience, that we believe will improve the efficacy and rigor of our programs. These goals are broken down into three categories:
- 1) Recruitment and Retention
 - a) Widen our pool of qualified bilingual teachers by **recruiting** internationally, interviewing remotely, and partnering with teacher-prep programs and other organizations.
 - b) Improve teacher **retention** by providing mentorship opportunities, stipends, and instructional supports.
 - 2) Leadership and Professional Development
 - a) Reformat the **leadership** and decision-making roles to include a Dual Language Director, a Dual Language Curriculum Specialist, an ELL Director, and Dual Language Coordinators in each building, all of whom regularly communicate, coordinate, and collaborate with each other and with DL teachers at the school level.
 - b) Better select and differentiate **professional development** for dual language and ESL positions.
 - c) [redacted] track DL **data** to better inform decisions about professional development and areas of success and room for improvement within the DL program.
 - 3) Expand DL Programs
 - a) **Vertically** into middle school.
 - b) **Horizontally** into other buildings.
 - c) A **self-contained** DL school, rather than a strand within a school.

In the next section, I discuss how Glenda's participation in the caucus supported her role as a co-building union representative, a position within Old City's traditional teachers' union, at her elementary school.

Grassroots Union Activism as Support and Respite

It can be isolating for teachers who stand up to injustice in their schools. Glenda reported having very few colleagues to talk to about her dual-language classroom concerns and the areas of injustice in their school. When Glenda became a co-building union representative with a colleague, it was a steep learning curve. Glenda, then a second-year teacher, was still trying to make sense of what it meant to be a teacher and how to be a co-building leader for her teacher's union. Glenda was reluctant to take on a union leadership role, but due to the caucus's support, a grassroots faction of the Old City Teachers Union provided Glenda with mentorship and the support she needed to navigate a fast-moving ecojustice crisis at her school. In many ways, the caucus helped teachers like Glenda use the union's power to fight for social justice in real-time. It was a source of knowledge and support that Glenda needed to fight for the safety issues in her school building. The caucus was also a much-needed respite for Glenda, who often felt different from the other teachers in her school. The caucus was a group of like-minded educators whom she could relate to and work alongside to address the areas of injustice within her school and the district.

Before much of the world had to institute lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Glenda's school was experiencing an environmental safety crisis in the Old City School District. She and her co-building leader received a lengthy report with legalese that shed light on the harmful carcinogens present in her school building:

I mean, the caucus is the only reason that I felt at all equipped to say, "Sure, I'll try and be a building rep even though I have no ex[perience]," because they [the caucus] plan training. They have been like a support network for me to think through union issues in a way that the [traditional union] leadership, currently, has just [been complete [sic] radio

silence. Through the caucus, I have met people who have been involved with rank and file organizing and just like being involved with things like how do you represent people, staff people, in your building and how do you address building issues? Basically, what is school building and the school district problem-solving? How could that happen? I've seen people in the caucus do that, and I've been part of that. *And so, I felt like, okay, there is a network that sees things in a way that makes sense to me and is inspiring to me and will have my back if I step into this role that feels out of my league in all other respects. I could only step into that role knowing that I had people that I could ask and that there was a context for it*" [emphasis added]. (Glenda, personal communication, July 21, 2019)

The caucus provided Glenda with the professional learning experiences to perform her duties as a teacher's union co-building representative. Although the traditional teacher's union was still the primary political vehicle for the district's teachers, the caucus was structured to meet their members' needs on the ground, provide professional development for problem-solving, and means to take action. Glenda found the caucus to be the network of activists she was looking for to develop her teacher activist skills and feel connected to other social justice educators.

Navigating Micro- and Macro-Structures in Educational Reform and Union Activism

With the caucus's support and her co-building union representative, Glenda learned how to navigate the school-based issues while also confronting the red tape involved in district-level and traditional teacher's union reform. Faced with a critical environmental safety issue in her school building, Glenda and her co-building rep developed ways to balance the tenuous relationships between building, union, and district leadership. After deciphering the document into laypeople's language, Glenda and her co-building representative were ready to take the next

steps to address the dangerous building conditions. This would include involving a facilities director at the district level:

We got somebody to decipher it, and we have some questions. We got it deciphered, and we're not appeased because there are clearly [still] questions there. It's a loaded document. It's addressed to that person that's above my principal that she was like, 'don't piss him off.' You know, like, 'I don't want to piss him off. He's above me.' That's the kind of thing where it will draw a lot of attention, and we need to make sure we're handling it carefully because we can make enemies with it, and we don't necessarily want to make enemies. (Glenda, personal communication, October 20, 2019)

Glenda and her colleague discovered how the delicate relationship between the principal and her supervisor contributed to the complex problem of addressing the environmental safety needs of her school community. Here, Glenda learned how to walk the fine line between activism and district politics. When I asked Glenda how she and her colleague would proceed after their conversation with the principal, Glenda conveyed the need for maintaining allies while focusing on holding all stakeholders accountable for their actions:

We need to hold people accountable for communicating and following through on what they say they're doing . . . I think we can keep [admin] kind of on our side, to say like, "Look, we're in this together." This is all a concern we have, but we're asking for transparency. You said you're all about transparency. We need it. (Glenda, personal communication, October 20, 2019)

Glenda's assessment of how to handle the environmental safety issue facing her school showed evidence of the support she received from the caucus. She and her colleague navigated the bureaucracy of school and district-level policies and union-based policies. Despite the challenges

of fighting for the safety of those working and learning at Glenda's school, she and her co-building representative remained committed to seeking answers and holding those with power accountable for providing safe building conditions.

Making Activism Accessible to the School Community

Glenda reported that, before she was appointed a union rep, most teachers came to the union for staffing issues or complaints, some avoiding union activities altogether. Glenda saw a shift in engagement in her school's union chapter. More of her colleagues began to "wear red in solidarity with national union agendas" (Glenda, personal communication, October 20, 2019) and stopped by to show support or help plan and run demonstrations for safe building conditions. Glenda shared a contract action feedback form that outlined some of the concerns she and her colleagues shared during a union-building meeting. Aligned with many national teacher's union demands, Glenda and her colleagues wanted increased living wages, more educators of color, and improved classroom ratios, among other action points. Figure 13 shows the feedback from the meeting. Glenda shared her excitement about being a part of the larger union fight and the newfound camaraderie organizing with her colleagues had created at her school. Glenda exclaimed, "We can use this to fight for everybody. That feels really powerful. I'm excited, and other unions are doing that too. Unions are doing that around the country. So, I believe in that. And I'm just like on the school level we can see kind of like comradery (sic)" (Glenda, personal communication, October 20, 2019). Glenda's union activism was a tool in helping Glenda fight injustice and begin to create a community for herself in her school.

Figure 13: *Contract Action Team-Feedback Form*

Contract Action Team- Feedback Form

Name _____ School _____

In Fall 2019, our union will return to the negotiating table with the School District. Across the country, from Los Angeles to West Virginia, our colleagues in other cities are demanding stronger contracts – and winning. Now is our chance to lay out the schools that ~~our~~ students, educators and families deserve. This document was developed by rank-and-file members who compared existing contract language with contract language from other cities. This document will now get edited by members via school-level contract action teams.

Of all of the issues listed, what are the top three issues you'd like to see prioritized in the upcoming negotiations?

1. *stagnant staffing/schools for raising* raise for
2. *leveling concerns -*
3. *paid maintenance for education of color*

raise for

stagnant medical service

Are there any issues that you think our union should NOT settle this next contract without? We know that a contract is always a reflection of our power, and we will have to build unity and strength to win these changes.

paid enough to have a living wage -
salaries need to keep up w/ the cost of living

leveling schools -
raise some specific maintenance

Is there anything missing, or any changes you'd like to see to this document? We will try to incorporate as much feedback as possible, but we won't be able to include everything. We will make sure to include issues that come up multiple times. Please use the back side of this paper for more details.

parity, living wage
calculate minutes
to have enforceable provisions

liberate
school librarian

Shifts in Conceptions of Activism

When Glenda and I first met for her initial interview, she had just finished her first year of teaching in the Old City School District and was starting her second year of teaching with the added role of union co-building leader. Despite being a novice teacher, Glenda had a more seasoned perspective on things in her career she could control and other things that may be bigger than what she could take on alone. Glenda shared, “In terms of how I conceptualize myself-being able to see where I am, what I'm doing, that allows me to show up again. This [activism] is both why it is important that I'm showing up and why I can show up because I haven't beat myself up to a pulp.” (Glenda, personal communication, July 19, 2019). Glenda’s ability to reflect and decide what fights she could take on and those she would walk away from were means for helping Glenda return to her school with an added leadership role for her second year of teaching in the district.

Power of Reflective Practice

In addition to describing her teacher activism to remain in teaching, Glenda also hoped that participation in this study would serve as a space to help her process her work and experience. Through chronicling her experience and actions, Glenda found respite in having a

person (me, the researcher) and the space (our interactions) as an outlet for making sense of who she was as a teacher activist and the impact her work was having on herself, her students, and the communities she served. In this regard, Glenda used her activism to find supportive communities for herself, her colleagues, her students, and the community. Participation in this study was another way Glenda could extend her network of like-minded educators:

I feel like at this point in my career and just life and existence, I just need to process a lot, and I just need to talk about what this whole thing is, has been for me, and is for me. So, it's just like a practical thing—a function that it serves and that helps me to show up to school, you know? . . . So then maybe like somewhere down the road, I won't feel this—the gut need where I have to talk to everyone, I make eye contact with about it (injustices at the school) just to get it off my chest. And even if that impulse isn't there, I still hope that the work of thinking with other people, kind of reflecting on where I am, where I might go, that has to stay there. So, I think creating space and just by talking to somebody who's thoughtful and cares about this and just connecting, I feel like that, in and of itself, is like a reminder and as a spark to just keep going and to keep the momentum. (Glenda, personal communication, July 19, 2019)

Glenda's participation in this study was one avenue she took to process all that occurred during her first year of teaching. Through Glenda's contributions to the study, she created another way for her teacher activism to support her in remaining at her school and extend her network of caring educators committed to creating safer and more culturally and linguistically relevant spaces for emergent bilingual students and families.

Mar-y-Sol³

“Hi Marisol, thank you so much for returning my . . .” “It’s Mar - y - Sol. Mar-y-Sol”

My first impression of Mar-y-Sol was that she was a high-energy Latinx woman. She spoke a mile-a-minute, but every word that left her lips seemed meaningful and important. Our first conversation was jam-packed and abrupt. Albeit brief, the phone call was full of colorful descriptions of how Mar-y-Sol identified as a person and an educator. Mar-y-Sol was a dual-language classroom teacher and a part-time master's student at a highly regarded educational institution. She had taught as a public school teacher for four years. It was obvious to me that our conversations would be whirlwinds of information packed into small spurts of time. Mar-y-Sol made it clear how her name should be pronounced from our first phone call. The pronunciation danced off her lips with the rich intonation of Spanish, Indigenous, and big city flavor. It was not until our first in-person interview that I understood the importance of the pronunciation of Mar-y-Sol’s name to her. Her name is a story of her identity, heritage, and legacy. Mar-y-Sol’s name is a political act put into motion every time she speaks it with her accented tongue.

Early Conceptions of Activism

Mar-y-Sol has had a strong disposition for activism from a very young age. She was cognizant that she was different from many of her family members and peers. Her father, a Black man, and her mother, a fair-skinned Puerto-Rican, raised Mar-y-Sol to be proud of her culture and committed to finding a profession where she could be independent and make a difference. In this section of Mar-y-Sol’s portrait, I call attention to Mar-y-Sol’s keen awareness of how race, class, skin color, and language impacted her development as a teacher activist. Mar-y-Sol’s early

³ Note: Mar-y-Sol is the only teacher activist to be given a first and last name. The reason for this choice will be shared in this portrait.

conceptions of activism were deeply rooted in her childhood experiences in schools and in her community.

Presence in Education as a Political Act

As a Brown woman, who also self-identified as Afro-Latinx and queer, Mar-y-Sol considered her very existence as a teacher as a political act. She acknowledged the low expectations that some people have for Brown women like her, and she emphasized the lack of teachers of color in the district in which she works. Mar-y-Sol wanted to become a teacher because she knew her presence in the classroom would be enacting change in a predominantly White district:

I define myself as a teacher activist because of my role as an educator and teacher. I am a changemaker. [It's] the drive that pushes my passion to be a teacher. What makes me a teacher is that I want a more equitable society; meaning, I want to help change the way schools operate and the way members of society *think* about our community, especially being that I'm a woman of Color [emphasis in original] I'm a Brown woman also in a space where most teachers in my district, like the data shows, that I can't, you know, not verbatim, but it's like over 80% of teachers are White women. So, my being a teacher is a form of change-making and I recognize that. So that's what pushes me as well because people unfortunately have perceived notions of you. One of those things is when growing up as a woman of color, there were many perceived stereotypes of what you're going to do and what you can be. So, when I mention my career or what I am, people are sometimes shocked. So, I also do it to be a role model. Like, hey, you can be a teacher, but you can also be . . . (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 16, 2019)

Mar-y-Sol's identities and personal experiences were influential to her conception of teaching and activism. She described becoming a teacher for her own learning and development, while also creating change for Black and Brown youth. Mar-y-Sol shared: "My drive to become a teacher to learn my history, teach students their history, [and] let them know that their culture is valuable within White spaces because no one really told me that" (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 16, 2019). She shared how being a teacher was a tool in changing people's stereotypes about her and other people of color. As Mar-y-Sol's dual-language classroom became more ethnically and racially diverse, she took on a new challenge of educating White children about how to be antiracist allies of their Black and Brown classmates.

Mar-y-Sol described an openness to teaching students about her culture and her life as a means of sharing what was unique about Black and Brown culture while simultaneously helping her third-grade students develop a familiarity with racial and ethnic diversity. In reflecting on how she used her own race and culture in her teaching, Mar-y-sol described how teaching about her Caribbean and Puerto-Rican roots helped her students have a reference point for the array of cultural practices that Brown people like her engage in with the hopes of dispelling stereotypes that they see on television:

I got to teach them about my West Indian culture. I got to teach them about how I love Soca music and how I love Caribbean food and how I love Puerto Rican food and how I love Mexican food too. And I love all the different things. But this is what I grew up with. I grew up eating like a Puerto Rican and I grew up eating soul food . . . So, it's breaking that perception because now when they see someone else like me, they're not sure. After all, they are going to think back to Mar-y-Sol and say she had a Spanish last name, quote-unquote, from Spain. I mean like what the TV says. She was like this. So,

it's not weird but different and unique. (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 16, 2019)

Serving as a role model for her young students was important to Mar-y-Sol and knew the benefits of having an Afro-Latinx teacher for children of color and White children alike. Mar-y-Sol saw her presence as an Afro-Latinx dual-language teacher as a political act. She was not remiss in her understanding of who she was and what her identity meant to her students, her school community, and the broader field of education.

Childhood Experiences as a Student

As a heritage Spanish speaker, Mar-y-Sol brought her love of language and culture to her teaching. Mar-y-Sol considered her very presence as an act of change. She would frequently reflect on how disjointed and at times, racist, teachers in school were toward her because her name had a Spanish pronunciation. Mar-y-Sol chronicled how it took meeting a Black educator in high school who encouraged her and empowered her to correct anyone who mispronounced her name. These childhood experiences shaped how Mar-y-Sol viewed herself and how she would demand to be treated. In the same vein, these experiences molded her into a culturally sustaining educator with a mission for bringing about change for young people.

Mar-y-Sol also communicated how her childhood public education experiences were punctuated with events that both honored and challenged her linguistic identity as a bilingual Spanish speaker. She reflected on her ability to understand Spanish but due to language attrition, she could not speak Spanish as well: “The thing is, when I sat in a Spanish class in high school, I understood Spanish very well at this time. I didn’t speak it that much, but I had a way higher understanding.” Mar-y-Sol remembered being one of two heritage speakers in her Spanish class, who had retained some Spanish albeit less than they knew as younger children. Mar-y-Sol

explained, “It was me and another kid. We had some Spanish. We were not strong in it because our public school did not value additive bilingualism, so I suffered language attrition” (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 16, 2019). Despite Mar-y-Sol’s ability to understand Spanish and complete school-based tasks in her home language, she knew that her Spanish was not as good as it used to be. She lamented the loss of an opportunity during her adolescence to be fully bilingual. Mar-y-Sol hoped that her work as a bilingual educator would make a difference for other emergent bilingual students. She saw her role as a bilingual educator to ensure that EBL students would have the opportunity to become fully bilingual.

Race, Class, and Linguistic Privilege

“But when you’re Brown and poor, we make you an ELL”

Mar-y-Sol discussed the complexities of having what many recognize as the phenotypic appearance of a Latinx person. Mar-y-Sol has curly dark hair with a light-brown complexion. Although she appeared “Spanish,” she did have the proficiency to do more advanced tasks in her home language, such as translating a conversation:

I realized the whole world perceives me as Latina. I don’t recognize that they perceive me as Latina. I was literally so upset. Everybody looks at me in Spanish. I don’t know how to respond to you. I know what you’re saying to some degree, right. I just don’t know how to respond to you. (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 16, 2019)

It was assumed that Mar-y-Sol would be proficient in Spanish but due to her lack of opportunities to develop her Spanish language skills throughout her schooling, Mar-y-Sol was less proficient than she wanted to be. The assumption that Mar-y-Sol would be a proficient Spanish speaker despite never having educational opportunities to develop her Spanish is an example of the interplay of race, class, and linguistic privilege. The paradox here is students like

Mar-y-Sol are stereotyped as primarily Spanish speakers but in reality, Black, Brown, and poor students are rarely allowed to develop and maintain their home language(s) in the classroom.

One defining moment in Mar-y-Sol's understanding of raciolinguistics—how race, class, and opportunity played into language learning (Flores & Rosa, 2015), occurred during her middle school career. Mar-y-Sol recalled when a White female classmate was able to translate a conversation into Spanish, a language this student had formally learned in school, but Mar-y-Sol could not do the same because she was not given the same opportunity:

I literally sat in middle school. They asked for somebody to translate something. I had a White classmate in the lunchroom say, "Oh yeah, I went to dual-language. I know how to translate that." I'm looking (sic) like I speak Spanish. *And I was like, I don't know how to translate. I don't know how to say it, but the White girl did. The privileged White girl did because when you're rich and White, it's valuable. But when you're Brown and poor, we make you an ELL [emphasis added].* (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 16, 2019)

At a young age, Mar-y-Sol had a keen understanding of the intersections of race, class, and language. Due to her childhood experiences, she understood that how you look, where you come from, and what access you have to resources plays a huge role in a person's linguistic development in school. Mar-y-Sol's unequal access to language education was an indelible influence on her desire to become a teacher activist for emergent bilingual students.

Teaching as a Pathway to the Middle-Class

Mar-y-Sol spoke in detail about how teaching was a pathway to becoming middle-class. She emphasized her experiences growing up in a working-class family, who aspired for her to go to college and get a career. Both of her parents held either lower-level management jobs or

worked for city agencies. She remembered how they would prepare her for a better life by giving her words of wisdom and the best educational foundations that they could provide:

Daddy had worked for the public transit system had a pretty decent job and Mommy always worked in the banks or healthcare and the medical field, but as a receptionist-not like higher prestige. My parents didn't have a degree. And I knew that my parents [would] be like, you don't want to struggle like us. Don't get pregnant; do not struggle like us. They kind of gave me that immigrant experience even though we weren't quoted unquote immigrants. But because we [kinda] were, I was a first-generation college graduate. (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 16, 2019)

Mar-y-Sol's parents encouraged her to pursue opportunities in her life that they did not have. Even though both of her parents were born in the United States, she felt that they still experienced many of the hardships that their immigrant parents faced.

Despite her parents' lack of formal higher education, they knew the importance of education for Mar-y-Sol and her siblings. Mar-y-Sol recalled how her mother, who had to get her GED due to being pregnant with Mar-y-Sol, would create literacy opportunities for her:

I was lucky enough that I had a foundation in school and mommy read to me . . . She had a small library and she started to read to me. She didn't know how to connect with me because she was 17 when she had me and she was about 18 when she started reading to me. She didn't know how to have a kid, so she would just read to me. (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 16, 2019)

Mar-y-Sol's mother and father served as models of inspiration and hope for her future. Like many working-class families, Mar-y-Sol's parents saw promise in her educational success to elevate her out of poverty.

Mar-y-Sol worked various jobs before becoming a city public school teacher. She discussed the financial tradeoffs of working in education rather than in the service industry early in her work history. While paying her way through college, Mar-y-Sol found waiting tables to be more financially lucrative than her teaching positions at private institutions; yet the education positions felt like a pathway to a career. Education was not her first choice of a profession. She wanted to become a journalist. Finding the journalism field too “cutthroat,” Mar-y-Sol found education as an avenue for social uplift, financial stability, and a way to make a change. She explained, “I knew it [the communications field] was cutthroat. So, I decided to become a teacher and use my voice. I didn't know I wanted to be a bilingual educator yet. I said, you know what, Mar-y-Sol? At least you'll leave being poor working class to low, middle-class” (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 16, 2019).

Mar-y-Sol reflected on how her life had begun to change both financially after graduating from college and becoming a public-school teacher. She shared, “I was in Creektown College for two and a half years. So, for my last year and a half, I'm teaching in my first year in Creektown. My first semester, I'm waitressing, my second semester I'm teaching in Watercliff.⁴ So now I see my class changing . . .” (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 16, 2019). Mar-y-Sol valued finding a career with “high prestige” that she and her family would be proud of. Becoming a bilingual teacher appeared to be a career that would bring prestige and financial stability. Mar-y-Sol's commitment to bilingual education has afforded her opportunities to use her voice to make a difference for emergent bilingual students.

Activism in the Classroom

⁴ Watercliff, a pseudonym, is a middle-class to upper-middle-class neighborhood within Creektown.

In the previous section, I illustrated how Mar-y-Sol's experiences with the impact of raciolinguistic ideologies in her past and her socioeconomic status influenced her decision to become a teacher. In the same vein, these factors also shaped the kind of pedagogical moves Mar-y-Sol implemented in her classroom. According to Martin and Ngcobo (2015):

The contested nature of schooling often seduces teachers to participate in struggles that invite them to meddle in identity construction politics. As a foundation for living and working for social justice, it is vital for teachers to engage critically with issues of social justice in relation to how they position themselves in these struggles. (p. 88)

Mar-y-Sol saw her presence as a Black, Latinx, Spanish-speaking queer woman in a predominantly White female-dominated teaching profession as an act of resistance and a form of social justice. She decided to use her position as a dual-language teacher to learn more about herself, teach children of color—including their history and contributions, and educate all people on creating anti-racist spaces. Mar-y-Sol approached these goals using social-justice, anti-racist curriculum. She also employed the use of social-emotional learning [SEL] pedagogies to teach her students how to communicate their wants and needs in a co-created classroom community. In this section, I detail how Mar-y-Sol used curricular approaches to provide her students with culturally and historically relevant learning experiences in the classroom.

Creating Culturally Sustaining Spaces in the Classroom

During our first interview, Mar-y-Sol shared how important it was for her to learn her history and teach young people their history to disrupt the deficit narratives of Black and Brown people in schools: “My drive to become a teacher is to learn my history, teach students their history, [and] let them know that their culture is valuable within White spaces because no one really told me that.” Mar-y-Sol's commitment to developing culturally sustaining pedagogies

was evident when you approached her classroom door. In Figure 14, Mar-y-Sol shared a photograph of her classroom door entitled, “Ser bilingüe es un súper poder,” which translates as “Being bilingual is a superpower.” Mar-y-Sol’s use of this quote on her classroom door can signal to students that Mar-y-Sol’s classroom is a safe space to speak their home language or learn a new language. Mar-y-Sol’s conscious choice to use this statement to adorn her classroom door illustrates her dedication to being seen as a bilingual educator and positioning all her dual-language students as bilingual learners. Her teacher activism is embodied in her unapologetic stance in celebrating the greatness of people of color and bilingualism. This pride-filled approach to teaching students to appreciate the contributions of Black, Brown, and/or multilingual people is the antithesis to racist, English-only perspectives often espoused in low-income schools serving minoritized students.

Figure 14: *Mar-y-Sol's Classroom Door*



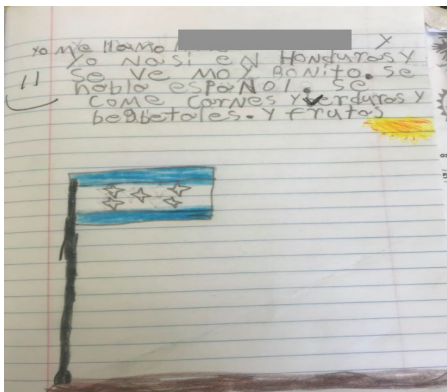
As previously mentioned, Mar-y-Sol explained how she saw her role as an Afro-Latinx educator as an opportunity to serve as a role model for her young people. Given that Mar-y-Sol herself had had only one or two teachers who affirmed her full identity as an Afro-Latinx bilingual student with academic potential, she stressed the importance of being a teacher and an activist as a Brown woman. She recalled how difficult it was for her to navigate predominantly White spaces in school without adequate role models. Mar-y-Sol explained, “I had to figure it

out on my own, or some teachers told me. I got mixed messages throughout my schooling. I had to learn how to navigate White spaces being Brown with Black and Brown friends” (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 16, 2019). Mar-y-Sol did not want the same for other Black and Brown children. Being a teacher activist for her meant serving as, what I call, a cultural mentor to her students; she could show them not only how to navigate White spaces but how to do so with pride:

We (she and her childhood friends) helped each other get through these things. That's why I wanted to be a teacher. That's what makes me a teacher activist because I'm teaching my students how to have a voice and how to navigate spaces in their Black and Brown bodies. (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 16, 2019)

Figure 15 shows a student’s writing sample about her pride in being Honduran and a Spanish speaker along with a drawing of the flag of Honduras. This artifact provides some evidence of Mar-y-Sol’s attempts at cultural mentorship for her third-grade students through the student’s articulation of her pride in being bilingual and Honduran.

Figure 15: *A Writing Sample Written by Mar-y-Sol's Bilingual Student from Honduras*



Note: The student writing in Figure 15 is written in Spanish. It translates into English as: “I was born in Honduras, and it looks very pretty. Spanish is spoken [in Honduras]. Meats and vegetables and begbetales [sic] are eaten [in Honduras]. And fruits.”

Mar-y-Sol took the experiences that she had as a child and her acquired knowledge in becoming an educator to try and create a classroom environment that celebrates being Black, Brown, and bilingual. Mar-y-Sol's third-grade classroom did not consist solely of children of color. In fact, in the 2020-2021 school year, Mar-y-Sol's students would be more racially diverse, with more affluent White students enrolled in her dual-language classroom than in previous years. In the next section, I provide examples of how Mar-y-Sol reimaged both content curriculum and SEL curriculum to create an anti-racist classroom, where children of color felt valued and White children felt prepared to serve as allies to their Black, Brown, and peers of Color.

Anti-Racist Teaching in the Gentrified Dual-language Classroom

In recent years, gentrification has drastically changed the student-body population of many big-city public schools (Chaparro, 2021; Dorner et al., 2021; Pearman, 2020). Analogous to this national trend, Mar-y-Sol's school community has experienced an influx of more affluent students enrolling in the neighborhood public schools. Mar-y-Sol's dual-language classroom has become more racially and ethnically diverse. Her classroom dynamic has also shifted in who is considered bilingual, with many of her new students have received formal Spanish language instruction before joining her classroom community. Mar-y-Sol reflected on her school and classroom's changing demographics:

And now that I'm about to have a predominately White class this coming year, it's more about how I am teaching them to be allies, which is going to be very new. And I never thought about that when I wanted to become a teacher. But now I am thinking about that because I am in a more mixed school. (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 16, 2019)

Although faced with a new challenge as a teacher, Mar-y-Sol saw her more diverse dual-language classroom as an opportunity to further her cause as an anti-racist educator by creating a classroom community where race, class, and linguistic privilege were at the forefront of the learning rather than the proverbial “elephant in the room.”

A significant component of Mar-y-Sol’s anti-racist bilingual instruction centered around teaching her students a complete history of the United States. As she reflected on her K-12 learning, Mar-y-Sol recalled very few learning experiences that centered on the struggles marginalized groups faced in the United States. She emphasized how one teacher taught about a horrific event in history because it was connected to him and his identity. She was perplexed by her teachers’ inability to see why she and her peers felt so disconnected from the curriculum they were being taught:

I had a seventh-grade teacher that wouldn't teach about slavery. He sure did teach a lot about the Holocaust. I loved learning about Holocaust. As an adult I recognized, you liked learning about other marginalized groups, and you could relate to people being oppressed and othered. That is why you enjoyed learning about Jews. That is why you cared. Because it connected to your life, right? It is so complex. (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 16, 2019)

Mar-y-Sol provided important insight into why connecting content to students’ passions and interests is important. Her history teacher taught the content that connected with him but was remiss in exploring topics his students were passionate about. In many instances, educators are taught to teach what they are most passionate about, but Mar-y-Sol’s reflection shows that this may not be entirely true. She was alluding to the importance of the teacher’s role in creating a passion for learning about content that speaks to them. She used the missed opportunities of her

previous teachers to construct an activist pedagogy that would teach her students the truth about history and disrupt Eurocentric-only approaches to history instruction.

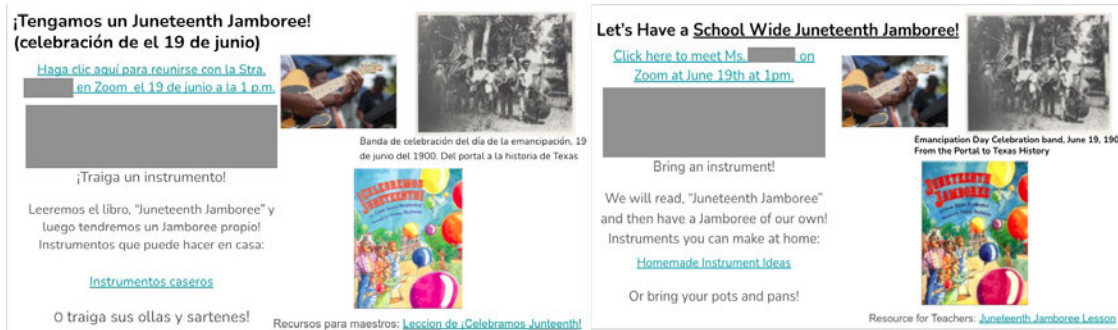
A salient theme in Mar-y-Sol's conceptions of what it means to be a teacher-activist of emergent bilingual students was shaped by the experiences Mar-y-Sol had as a K-12 student. These learning experiences provided her with an antithetical view of what teaching and learning should be for students:

I love teaching my students about the first civil rights movement. I like to call it the first because *we are still* [emphasis in original] the civil rights movement . . . I'll put up images and it'll say no Mexicans, no Spanish. Why isn't that in our textbooks? Why isn't that taught? Across the country, the Native Americans, the Mexicans, and all the Latinos were grouped as Mexicans. One! Spanish! Not even Spanish were Latinos and there's over 20 countries. Only Spanish people are really from Spain but whatever. Latinos were discriminated against the same way the Black man is and was. Why don't we show that there were signs that said this in our Southern communities that had Jim Crow laws? Why isn't that taught? Why do we divide and conquer our marginalized and oppressed groups? (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 16, 2019)

Even though she was problem-posing, Mar-y-Sol emphatically knew the answers to her own questions. She studied, planned, and implemented curricula that filled in and replaced many gaps in her students' textbooks and more extensive curricula. Figure 16 provides two slides, one in English and the other in Spanish, that Mar-y-Sol and her colleagues created to teach their school community about Juneteenth, the Independence Day for emancipated Black people in the United States. Participants were encouraged to bring an instrument to play at the Jamboree. The slides also provided students, families, and teachers with photographs about Juneteenth and a read-

aloud book with a lesson plan for participants. This artifact evidenced her commitment to providing her students and the larger school community with bilingual resources to learn about and celebrate Juneteenth. More examples of Mar-y-Sol's culturally sustaining, anti-racist curriculum will be discussed in the upcoming section on third space community learning.

Figure 16: *Schoolwide Juneteenth Jamboree Invitation in English and Spanish*



Creating Humanizing Spaces Using Social-Emotional Learning and Restorative Justice

Mar-y-Sol had a unique perspective on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and restorative justice practices. Mar-y-Sol emphasized the importance of community in her classroom. Like Glenda's focus on students' self-love and respect for others, Mar-y-Sol valued Indigenous ways of building community and repairing harm in her classroom. Taking on restorative practices rather than disciplinary practices is a form of teacher activism. Teaching students how to love themselves and show care for others can be seen as a radical act, especially when many schools rely on punishment rather than restoration. In a social media interview, Mar-y-Sol explained to her interviewer why she uses SEL and restorative justice practices in her classroom:

Verónica mentioned restorative justice, which is a system that is put in place to allow for equitable means of problem-solving; doing it in a way that is very mindful of one's cultural upbringings and making sure that we're helping our students like inquire about the world around them rather than feed them what they're supposed to be doing.

Restorative justice is usually a space like you're in circles-very similar to our indigenous

backgrounds. And if we think *In Lak'ech*⁵, Mayans and Aztecs, right, everything was circular; restorative justice usually entails restorative justice circles. So, it's like embodying or transforming an entire new way the schools are functioning because schools are functioning in a restorative justice manner. (Published confidential video, 2020)

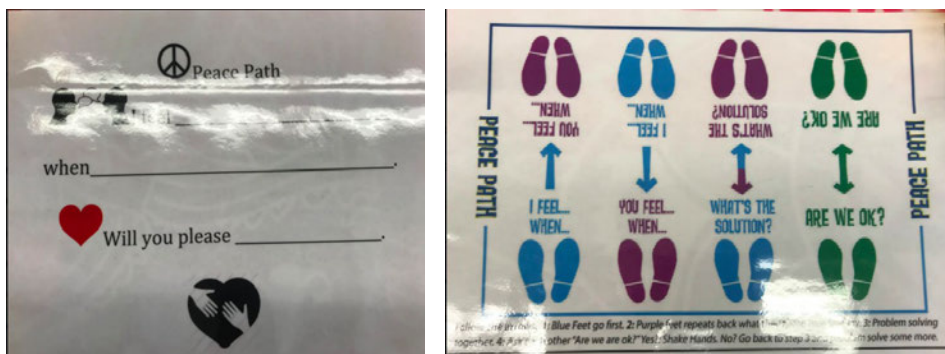
Here Mar-y-Sol explained how restorative justice practices helped connect teaching and learning to Indigenous ways of knowing. She was invoking her ancestral legacy to foster more humanizing spaces for her and her young people to coexist within the classroom. By referencing *In Lak'ech*, the Mayan moral code which translates as “You are my other me. What I do onto you, I do onto myself,” Mar-y-Sol illustrated how she promoted humanizing practices to establish, support, and repair meaningful relationships in her classroom. Figure 4 shows two laminated posters that Mar-y-Sol placed in a designated area of her classroom. The Peace Path was intended to provide her students with a structure for having difficult conversations with their peers and finding peaceful means to repair harm in a peaceful manner. The Peace Path provides students with sentence starters to help them communicate their feelings, needs, and wants to a peer. The second part of the path provides footsteps for students to face one another and use restorative prompts such as, “Are we OK?” or “What’s the solution?” This Peace Path is evidence of how Mar-y-Sol incorporates SEL and restorative justice to “to allow for equitable means of problem solving in a way that is very mindful to one’s cultural upbringings . . .” (Published confidential video, 2020). Mar-y-Sol has reimagined her classroom to be a space of

⁵ *In Lak'ech*: You are my Other me is a Mayan principle often used in Ethnic Studies and Restorative Justice Circles to teach and remind others of their connection to one another and the world. For more information, see p. 19 of <https://www.annenberginstitute.org/sites/default/files/VUE34.pdf>

healing and community for her dual-language classroom, which could have potentially become more isolating for students due to the changing demographics of the students. Instead, Mar-y-Sol emphasized restorative approaches to her classroom to help her students form more authentic relationships with one another through the supports that she provided in her classroom.

The Peace Path provides an example of a student-centered approach to classroom management that is not directed by an adult. This process aligns with Mar-y-Sol’s goal of using restorative justice practices to model how students can “inquire about the world around” without having an adult manage how students repair their relationships in the classroom. This is a defining characteristic of Mar-y-Sol’s teacher activism. She valued the contributions and abilities of her students as a part of the classroom community; thus, she created spaces where they could play an integral part in managing and maintaining the classroom community.

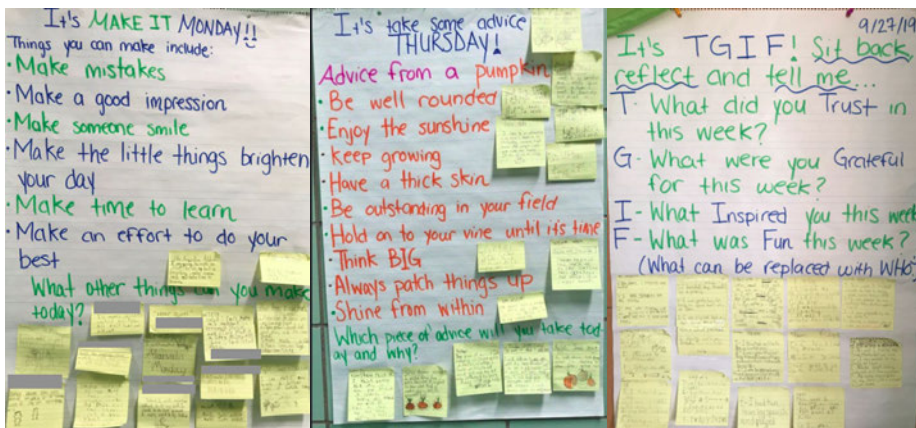
Figure 17: *Peace Path Anchor Charts Used for Student-Centered Conflict Resolution*



Another example of how Mar-y-Sol created humanizing spaces in her classroom using SEL were her daily SEL activities. Figure 18 highlights three examples of SEL classroom activities that provided students with opportunities to develop their social and emotional selves and provide feedback to the classroom community about how to continue this development in meaningful ways across the school week. On the “Make It Monday” chart, students were encouraged to think of ways that they can make something. This “something” could range from a mistake or a way to make someone smile. The students responded to this task by providing

examples of how they will realize a goal for Make It Monday. On a Thursday in Mar-y-Sol's classroom, the children were asked to engage in an exchange of advice. The "Take Some Advice Thursday" chart outlined some possible forms of advice students could give and take from their peers. On Post-it notes, students then created written and visual advice to share with their peers. In this artifact, students are invited to provide advice along a theme. For example, Mar-y-Sol wrote an example of advice that may come from a pumpkin. In orange marker, a bulleted list of advice included "be well-rounded" and "always patch things up." These SEL activities show strategies that Mar-y-Sol used to build community in her classroom and place an emphasis on pedagogies of care. Noddings (1995) argued that "There is a real danger of intrusiveness and lack of respect in methods that fail to recognize the vulnerability of students" (p. 677). Mar-y-Sol understood these dangers; she took the work of promoting safe spaces for students to be vulnerable and fostering opportunities for them to experience care very seriously. As a teacher activist of EBLs, Mar-y-Sol focused on the whole child. She worked to provide her students with academic vocabulary to grow as bilingual learners while simultaneously developing their social-emotional vocabulary to support their development as well-rounded human beings.

Figure 18: Anchor Charts for Daily Social-Emotional Learning Activities



Third Space Community Learning

Mar-y-Sol often communicated how she used community knowledge and history to learn and grow as an educator as well as a pedagogical tool to teach students how to inquire about the world around them. One unique way that Mar-y-Sol accomplished this goal was with field trips, to connect her students to authentic learning experiences where they can learn about themselves and others through firsthand real-world experiences. In essence, Mar-y-Sol creates a third space for teaching and learning. Drawing upon the work of postcolonial theorists such as Bhabha (2004), the third space or hybridity can be described as an “in-between ” space for exploration of oneself as an individual or as a community (p. 1). Moje et al. (2004) further expounded upon third space and hybrid spaces in literacy instruction: “The notion of hybridity can thus apply to the integration of competing knowledges and discourses; to the texts one reads and writes; to the spaces, contexts, and relationships one encounters; and even to a person’s identity enactments and sense of self” (p. 42). I had the opportunity to experience how Mar-y-Sol prepared to teach in such hybrid spaces during one of our field visits to an Indigenous Peoples museum.

Along with her partner, Mar-y-Sol invited me to walk through the museum as she planned for her class visit there in the near future. During this field visit, I had the privilege of seeing how Mar-y-Sol investigated museum artifacts, asked meaningful questions to the museum’s teaching artists, and engaged in interactive play with museum exhibits and activities. I witnessed Mar-y-Sol’s pedagogical praxis in action. Mar-y-Sol transformed into Mar-y-Sol Toka, her classroom teacher persona. Her partner and I quickly learned not to disturb Mar-y-Sol Toka as she explored the museum in preparation for her students’ visit. Mar-y-Sol selected her pseudonym for this study during our field visit to the museum after watching a short film featured in the museum by a local artist. Mar-y-Sol was so inspired by the film presentation and the Latinx creator that she decided upon her pseudonym, Mar-y-Sol Toka. After Mar-y-Sol’s

partner and I witnessed Mar-y-Sol in her “teacher mode,” I knew that she would need to have a surname as a pseudonym too; her teacher persona was so strong during that moment that I realized a surname had to be included. Drawing again from the film screening, Mar-y-Sol chose Toka as her surname, making her full name for the study Mar-y-Sol Toka. Like Mar-y-Sol, her pseudonym was the embodiment of her pride in being a descendant of the Taíno peoples and the rich culture of Puerto Rico. As a trio, we walked the halls of the featured Taíno exhibit in the museum. I snapped photos of the origins and contributions of the Garifuna people to share with Kevin, another study participant. I observed how Mar-y-Sol and her partner connected their experiences as Afro-Latinx women to the multimedia exhibits. We were both patrons and educators. We simultaneously learned and made history together.

Several months after our field visit to the museum, Mar-y-Sol shared some photos and work samples from her students’ visit to the museum. These artifacts documented some of the experiences the students had while at the museum and the learning that took place in their classrooms following their field trip. In Figure 19, Mar-y-Sol’s students are pictured in front of a museum exhibit about Indigenous foods and words that were derived from the Taíno people. The students can be seen facing the exhibits and pointing to the labels and the captions individually and in small groups. Once students returned to class, Mar-y-Sol had the students revisit the museum literature and write reflections on their excursion. Figure 20 displays a photo of Mar-y-Sol’s students reviewing the museum handouts on their colorful classroom carpet; some are seated while others lay on their bellies with their composition notebooks and museum pamphlets side-by-side. The remaining artifacts are samples of the students’ writing reflections; each example is written in Spanish with detailed illustrations. The students wrote about various aspects of Taíno culture such as foods, music, and cultural practices that they learned during

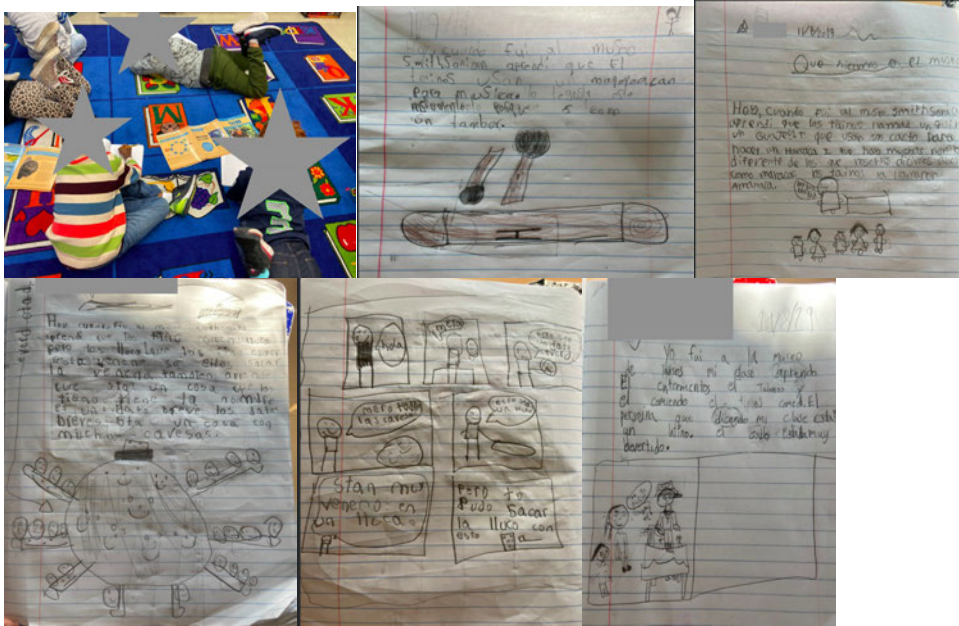
their trip. They also drew and wrote about the museum contributors and teaching artists who gave interactive workshops to the students as they walked through the halls of the Taíno exhibit.

Mar-y-Sol cultivated opportunities for her students and her to explore the contributions of the Taíno people in a third space. Her classroom exceeded the walls of her school building. The students' learning experiences were unbounded—they blurred the lines of who can be the teacher and who can be the student. The museum, the museum contributors, and the legacy of the Taíno people became the primary sources. The students were both researchers and historians, who were welcome to ask questions and share their knowledge and experiences. Klein et al. (2013) asserted that the third space in education operates as an “and/also rather than an either/or place to share and construct knowledge and requires that participants cross their customary role boundaries” (p. 28). Mar-y-Sol's philosophy of providing students with the tools to investigate the world equipped with multiple ways of knowing can be ascertained through her planning and facilitation of her class' trip to the Indigenous Peoples museum. Through an Indigenous, anti-racist lens, Mar-y-Sol cultivated authentic school and community links to support her students' learning. By her facilitation of community-centered knowledge and learning, Mar-y-Sol showcased the alignment between her beliefs about the importance culturally sustaining pedagogies and her actual practice with her students. Mar-y-Sol's teacher activism was grounded in creating culturally rich, anti-racist learning opportunities for her students. This was evidenced by the lengths she took to research, plan, and culminate this learning experience with her students.

Figure 19: *Mar-y-Sol and her Students Studying at an Indigenous Peoples museum*



Figure 20: Mar-y-Sol's Students Reviewing Taino Museum Resources and Student Responses About Their Trip



Out of Classroom Activism

Growing professionally as an educator was of the utmost importance to Mar-y-Sol. When I arranged times with her to participate in the study, we frequently met after she had finished a professional development session or during her preparation for her dual-language third graders. She sought out professional learning opportunities for herself, but she also found every opportunity to educate fellow educators. She took pride in her enrollment in a master's degree program focused on cultural studies at a prestigious institution; she was a part of race affinity groups and programming for anti-racist education. Mar-y-Sol took heed of her parents' encouragement to further her education. While she pursued her education goals, she created space for others to learn along with her. In concert with her pursuits for professional development, she was also determined to recruit more bilingual educators of color. Mar-y-Sol was adamant about the need for more bilingual teachers to whom students could relate. These educators would also serve as the antithesis to narrow stereotypes of culturally and linguistic

diverse people. Mar-y-Sol's activism was steeped in a zeal for teaching and learning about culture, language, and anti-racism and the legacy of recruiting more educators like "Mar-y-Sol" to serve the children of her city. She felt compelled to find more educators to meet the needs of emergent bilingual children. Her commitment to serving the needs of EBLs through teacher recruitment was a testament to Mar-y-Sol's teacher activism. The creation of an activist legacy was grounded in Mar-y-Sol's goal to ensure that the presence of bilingual educators of color would not end with her.

Creating Professional Development Opportunities for Herself

A key part of Mar-y-Sol's activism involved actively seeking out critical professional development opportunities. Critical professional development (CPD) can be defined as a "development space that frames teachers as politically-aware individuals who have a stake in teaching and transforming society" (Kohli, et al., 2015, p. 7). Mar-y-Sol repeatedly stressed the importance of learning about her language and culture and in turn, teaching students of color and White students alike, the rich history and legacy of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Due to this goal, Mar-y-Sol sought out professional learning opportunities that privileged the historic and lived experiences of BIPOC. Additionally, many teachers are required to have a master's degree and continuous professional development hours maintain their certification and receive pay raises. This was true of Mar-y-Sol's school district. Mar-y-Sol decided to meet both expectations by pursuing a master's degree for international education in a premier educational institution. Despite being a fulltime educator and a part-time master's student, Mar-y-Sol served on student-led boards at her higher education institution and was a member of the culture and diversity committee at the public school where she taught. In this section, I highlight some examples of Mar-y-Sol's critical professional development experiences

and contributions.

When asked to describe her activism, Mar-y-Sol shared her desire to counter the White gaze of language, culture, and identity in schools and the larger society. She spoke personally and globally about the marginalization of poor, Black, Brown, and/bilingual people:

[I want to] prove to the world that I'm a Black woman and I speak Spanish. I'm a Latinx woman and I speak Spanish and English. I'm an American, Latinx woman and I speak both languages and I believe in biliteracy. I believe in using language as a resource for our poor community, quote-unquote financially poor communities to grow.

Mar-y-Sol continued to reflect upon the importance of promoting “language as a resource” (Ruiz, 1984) by sharing how the gentrification of her dual-language classroom and the surrounding community has shed light on the raciolinguistics issue of dual-language learning when the new language learners are affluent and White rather than Black or Brown (Chaparro, 2021; Dorner et al., 2021):

I hope to bring light to the gentrification, light to all the research that we've been talking about. Why is bilingualism okay for rich white students and not okay for Brown, poor socio-economic students? No, we shouldn't just be Brown! It should be Black and Brown and [we should be] inserting the word Black amongst our Latinx community more. Stop tabooing it. Stop hiding us! (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 19, 2019)

Mar-y-Sol used her nuanced understanding of the interplay between language, race, culture, and identity/ies carefully craft critical professional development opportunities for herself and others. Notably, her participation in CPD was one of the many ways she sought to make Black and Brown people visible. She would not let her Blackness and bilingualism be hidden in spaces of power nor would Mar-y-Sol settle for educational institutions to be exclusionary of less affluent

BIPOC and multilingual people. This radical stance in support of the poor, of BIPOC, and linguistically marginalized people was a cornerstone of Mar-y-Sol's work as a teacher activist.

Creating Professional Development Opportunities for Others

Through her master's coursework and her personal social activism, Mar-y-Sol worked to promote anti-racist spaces and recruit more bilingual educators of color. She saw this as a vital aspect of her teacher activism. Mar-y-Sol also voiced how important her participation in this study was to raising consciousness around the importance of teacher activism for emergent bilingual youth and the promotion of bilingualism in public schools.

Promotion of Anti-Racist Spaces

As previously discussed in the "Activism in the Classroom" section, Mar-y-Sol was instrumental in planning and facilitating a Juneteenth Jamboree for her school community. She also extended herself to the larger community by participating in social media events to further promote comprehensive information and educational practices for BIPOC. One example of how Mar-y-Sol used to promote anti-racist spaces in a larger sphere than her own school and community is showcased in Figure 21. Figure 21 shows an email Mar-y-Sol sent to all her education contacts to assist them in preparing for the upcoming school year. Mar-y-Sol used her graduate school learning and the knowledge she had gained from her own cultural journey to create a space for educators to have dialogue and co-create anti-racist experiences for their students.

Figure 21: *Mar-y-Sol's Email to Educators Regarding Anti-Racist Centered Professional Development*



My name is [redacted] and I am so happy to connect with you. To begin, I hope this message finds you safe and well! As we prepare for the new school year, I want to support anyone interested in dedicating time to prepare to teach with an anti-racist lens. PBS has shared a powerful tool that we can use as a collective.

The goal of this virtual viewing is to watch this in a brave space and create a dialogue that allows us as educators to actively listen, engage, empower one another and deepen our *conocimiento* (understanding) of actively teaching with an anti racist lens. Each video is one hour long and then there will be an hour of dialogue.

Will you join myself and other educators in this journey?

Recruiting More Bilingual Teachers of Color

It is fitting to end Mar-y-Sol's portrait with her goal of recruiting more bilingual teachers of color; Mar-y-Sol takes her work with students a step further by finding ways to encourage bilingual BIPOC to become *bilingual* teachers [emphasis added]. Listening to Mar-y-Sol speak about her goals for activism, she expressed the importance of what I have called a "teacher activist legacy." By teacher activist legacy, I mean that Mar-y-Sol understood the proverbial shoulders that she stands on and she would like to be an activist foundation for others:

Well, I'm going to be a hundred percent honest. I think the first thing I hope is that my experiences can be told in a way that encourages teacher activism; that our exchange also encourages teachers of color who are not strong in Spanish to go back and consider being a bilingual teacher. (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 19, 2019)

Mar-y-Sol's commitment to increasing the number of bilingual educators of color was one of the driving forces behind her participation in this dissertation study. She saw her contribution to this research as an opportunity to recruit more bilingual educators of color, who would be as committed to teacher activism for EBLs as she was. Mar-y-Sol and I both hoped the implications of this study would continue to promote and share the teacher activist legacy that Mar-y-Sol, the other three study participants, and countless other teacher activists continue to build.

Mar-y-Sol's Activist Legacy

Mar-y-Sol embraced the political nature of her presence in a largely White teaching profession; she wore her Blackness, Latinx heritage, queerness, and her bilingualism as a badge of honor. Mar-y-Sol saw opportunities to promote self-love, restorative practices, and anti-racist initiatives when others might have perceived this work as a challenge, especially in an increasingly gentrified school community. Mar-y-Sol's activism stemmed from her commitment to take on challenging ideologies and tasks with the help of her community. Through her work to include community-based stakeholders and Indigenous ways of knowing into her work with students and teachers, Mar-y-Sol's teacher activism shows the benefits of having more multilingual educators of color in the teaching profession.

Jessie

Due to Jessie's wide array of activism, she was a teacher activist that I had heard a lot about. She has been featured in prominent education books and edited volumes both as a subject and an author. As co-organizer for a local teacher activist group (TAG), Jessie had been a facilitator at a few of the TAG meetings and teacher conferences that I had attended. Despite being in many of the same spaces with Jessie, we had never formally met. Jessie and I were introduced amid a march honoring a young Black man who was lost to gun violence way too soon. We marched and chanted, "We are victorious!" We marched in solidarity with those who believed in the motto, Black Lives Matter. It was an impromptu introduction. Jessie and her partner marched side by side, pushing their beautiful baby girl in a stroller. From that introduction, we were able to reconnect through her participation in this study.

During our initial interview, Jessie provided insight into how she identified and her upbringing. Jessie was a self-described "White, genderqueer, middle-class, Italian, Irish person." (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019). Jessie worked as a public school international

high school teacher for 15 years. As I listened to Jessie recount her childhood, I found commonalities in Jessie's and my upbringing. Jessie reflected on her single mother's struggles in caring for her family. She also emphasized the power of having a community around her to ensure that she always had what she needed. Jessie recalled, "I had free and reduced lunch as a child. I was surrounded by people that were a lot more secure. So, if our bottom went out then there was somewhere else to go. Even though our floor was shaky." Jessie had a proverbial village that helped her and her family through challenging times. Jessie's activism also mirrors the kind of community that supported her when she was younger; Jessie provided spaces of security and support for her students and other teachers. This portrait highlights Jessie's conceptions of activism and the social and political activism work that Jessie has engaged both inside and outside her classroom.

Early Conceptions of Teaching

Jessie described her process of becoming a teacher as non-linear. She mentioned several times how "it just happened" or "I don't know how I got here," and "I'm still here" (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019). After leaving the Peace Corps, Jessie looked for a next step in her career. Becoming a TESOL teacher provided Jessie with a career where she could work with young people and provide political education. Some of Jessie's influences on her early conceptions of teaching came from her experiences as a student. Jessie's experiences throughout her elementary, secondary, and undergraduate education helped to shape how she would later relate to her students and conceive what teaching is and what it is not.

Childhood Experiences as a Student

Due to moving around a lot during her elementary schooling, Jessie described herself as a student who struggled in school. She also reported how many of her elementary school teachers

had low expectations for her, which aided in her continued academic difficulties. These academic difficulties would eventually land Jessie in a remedial class in first grade and special education classrooms thereafter. Jessie explained, “I was in special ed through elementary school, but I think it was more because I remember very vividly my teacher being like, this test doesn't affect your grade.” Jessie’s recollection of how her teachers minimized the importance of standardized testing is one that she shared to show how her teachers’ low expectations for her contributed to her lack of attention and drive in school. She explained how she would underperform on these standardized exams by “playing.” Jessie went on to say, “So I was like, (psh-expression), why am I going to take it [the test]? So, I would play this game between A, B, C, and D, and I'd be like, Oh, two for A. One for . . .” Jessie would quickly learn that her inattention to her schoolwork would go unchallenged, and play would be one of the ways that she would pass her time during those primary years. Jessie recounted, “I was always playing in my desk and not really paying attention. I had those old school desks, where you had your books inside, and so I would play with my erasers. I don't remember really ever paying attention (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019). Due to Jessie’s transient home life and the lack of high expectations from her elementary school teachers, Jessie struggled with academic performance in school, was placed in special education, and quickly learned how to disengage from her education through play. These elementary school experiences would later become one of the factors that contributed to Jessie’s conceptions of teaching and her ability to relate to many of her emergent bilingual high school students.

Secondary and Higher Education Experiences

In middle school, Jessie's awareness of who she was as a special education student and how special education students were perceived would begin to shift how Jessie viewed school and her role as a student. Jessie recalled:

I remember in sixth grade, I heard from my friends, if you're in special ed in sixth grade they call you 'tard classes.' And I was like, Whoa, Whoa, Whoa. So, then I tried really hard, and I was like, all right, I'm gonna take this test. I'm going to get out of special ed. And I remember being very clear and deliberate about it. So, then I got out of special ed in sixth grade. (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019)

This quote shows how Jessie and her peers understood the criteria for who would remain in special education after middle school. Although Jessie's newfound academic performance helped her transition out of special education class, this realization also made her dislike the institution of schooling even more. Like many teenagers, whom she would later teach as a high school teacher, Jessie became increasingly more disengaged in school and began getting into trouble. Jessie asserted, "I hated middle school. I never came to school, and I got into a lot of trouble." Based on Jessie's reflections on her elementary and middle school experiences, Jessie showed up for school both literally and figuratively when school had a purpose. She learned of the consequences of being a "struggling student" or a "special ed" student. Jessie's positioning as a poor-performing student seems to have been a catalyst for her to create more authentic learning experiences for her emergent bilingual learners once she had the opportunity to become a teacher.

Jessie shared that she did not begin to feel like a student until college. She described belonging to a friendship group of "misfits" in college. Being at a predominantly White

institution (PWI), Jessie used the term “misfits” because they were largely LGBTQ and/or students of color. Despite feeling this way, Jessie also found college to be a place of support both from teachers and programs like the equal opportunity programs (EOP) on many campuses. Jessie shared two instances where she especially felt supported. Jessie explained, “It wasn’t really until college that I saw myself as a student who was very much insecure about my reading and writing. And I was surrounded by very well-educated people, who kind of helped me” (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019). Jessie both understood her areas of need but also recognized where to seek support, something she was not provided in school when she was a child. Reflecting on the supports she received in college, Jessie did remember one of her high school teachers, who took the time to see and respond to Jessie’s harmful patterns in school. Jessie’s described this teacher’s care and intervention in her life by stating:

I remember I got kicked out of my class, it was in-school suspension. And one of my teachers, who I was really close with. He was kinda like, “What are you doing? Stop! You need to get out of here. If you don’t get out of this area, you’re not ever going to be anything.” (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019)

Throughout Jessie’s schooling experience, she responded to high expectations and support. Jessie applied herself more to her academic pursuits when they were meaningful to her and those around her were invested in supporting her success both as a student and a human being. Jessie would later become an educator and teacher activist, who would espouse these virtues in her practice. Jessie’s student persona has been instrumental in cultivating Jessie’s beliefs about students, teaching, and activism. These themes are discussed in upcoming sections of her portrait.

Initial Conceptions of Teacher Activism Shaped by Early Career Experiences

Like the other three teacher activists in the study, Jessie's pathways to teacher activism were complex and multifaceted. She already had a disposition toward social justice work and political activism after graduating from college. Through her early career choices, Jessie was able to work in the fields of education and social services as a Peace Corps member and in the sphere of political activism as a union organizer. These two early career experiences coupled with Jessie's student experiences helped to shape Jessie's identity as an activist and later, a teacher activist. In this section I describe the impact that Jessie's work as a Peace Corps member and a union organizer played in developing her conceptions of teacher activism. Additionally, several themes are discussed showcasing Jessie's conceptions of teacher activism during this point in her career.

Jessie credited her early conceptions of teacher activism to meeting a university-based educator during her summer training program for the Peace Corps. Jessie wrote, "She taught us about the tools of whiteness, and she was definitely a role model for me as a white teacher." Jessie shared how this experience would be an entry point to teacher activist groups for radical educators and queer youth and educators. Jessie continued to explain in her reflection that, "Through my organizing work, I had many role models, like E.D., who was an out Black queer teacher. I also participated in my ItAGs (Inquiry to Action Groups)⁶ other [radical educator] events" (Jessie, personal communication, March 15, 2021). Jessie's Peace Corps preparation became one of the most influential experiences in shaping who she was as an educator.

⁶ "An ItAG is a study group that comes together around a social justice issue or topic. ItAGS are usually small groups of educators, parents, students, activists, teaching artists, and community members. The goal of the ItAGs is to pursue a common inquiry on a social justice topic and create an action around this area of study. The group decides the focus and structure of the meetings." (<http://www.educatorsforsocialjustice.org/inquiry-to-action-groups-itags.html>)

After returning from the Peace Corps in Mongolia, Jessie was in search of a job. She was recruited to become a union organizer due to her Peace Corps volunteer work. Jessie described having a “political awakening” after completing her volunteer work and union organizing position:

I had this political awakening between Mongolia and the end of being a union organizer. I just really saw, very clearly, the injustice, from a broader economic lens, not just from my own oppression. And so, then, you know, I was very frustrated with the union and the lack of like political education. I felt like [if] we're going to really change the world, it's through education. (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019)

Here Jessie described how her early career experiences began to shape her own critical consciousness and steer her toward teacher activism. These two early career choices created a pathway for Jessie to become a teacher activist. Although she might have been unaware of how these choices would put her on the trajectory to become a public school TESOL teacher of immigrant youth, Jessie acknowledged that her experiences were aligned to her current profession. When asked how exactly Jessie came to public school teaching, she explained, “I don’t even know. I think because I got my TESOL license, and I liked doing international stuff. I loved traveling. I think it all just happened, you know, but it was seamless like that” (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019). In Jessie’s attempts to combine her love of international affairs, traveling, and a newfound love of working with youth, working with immigrant high school youth at an international school became an ideal career choice.

Beliefs About Students

Jessie’s early experiences as a student helped influence her beliefs about her own students. In this section, I highlight two major themes present in Jessie’s beliefs about her

students. The first theme gleaned from the data was her belief that students should be positioned as assets by the school and the larger community. Jessie also believed that her students have agency and should be afforded opportunities to have choice in what they are learning and how they are learning.

Students Should be Positioned as Assets and Not as Deficits

To Jessie, her students were assets to the classroom, school, and the larger community. She acknowledged that her students are often marginalized by their school system, and she hoped to create learning opportunities that would challenge these deficit discourses. In an application for a Fund for Teachers grant Jessie asserted, “Our school system is one that often views my students through a deficit lens, focusing on what they're missing instead of what they already know.” This grant proposal was intended for Jessie to participate in storytelling workshops and improv classes to help her students develop their own stories through storytelling and improvisation. Jessie wrote, “I would like to provide them [students] with an opportunity to shape their own personal narrative, develop their voice and share their experience with others” (Jessie, personal communication, August 30, 2019). Jessie saw her students through an asset-based lens. Unlike traditional approaches to developing EBL’s language skills, Jessie saw her young people as individuals with a voice, who could tell their own stories.

Importance of Fostering Student Choice and Agency

Jessie’s beliefs about the importance of fostering student agency and student choice both inside and outside of the classroom helped to shape how Jessie created learning and leadership experiences for her students to develop their language and literacy skills. While defining her interpretation of student empowerment, Jessie explained the following: “Empowering means to one, bring them [students] to the table. Most of the time, and I'm guilty of this throughout my

teaching career, I assume I know what is best and I bring it to them. I'd never ask them, what do you want to learn? What afterschool activities do you want?" Here, Jessie reflected on how she has come to learn from her pedagogical missteps in creating space for student empowerment in her classroom. In the upcoming sections of this portrait, I detail how Jessie's conceptions about student empowerment have impacted her beliefs about the purposes of teaching and learning and how those beliefs have been translated into her pedagogical and activist practices.

Beliefs About Pedagogy

Promoting a pedagogy of self-love was important to Jessie. She believed that students should be positioned as powerful agents of change, who had the capacity to love others, and most importantly, love themselves. Jessie attempted to realize these beliefs by employing pedagogies, that centered on self-love, honored multilingualism, and implemented student-centered interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and assessing content and language objectives. She also espoused a critical approach to teaching, learning, and activism, which invited students, families, teachers, and communities to challenge systems of oppression. At the heart of Jessie's pedagogy lies the promotion of self-love, amplifying her students' voices and experiences, and developing a criticality (Muhammad, 2020) toward the purposes of systems in reproducing oppression rather than empowerment.

For Jessie, the school context was important in understanding why self-love was important as a pedagogical concept. Jessie taught high school social studies, English, and English as a Second Language (ESL) at a public international high school. Jessie described the context of her international school as one that "serves 100% English language learners. Specifically, all our students are newcomers, many having arrived in the U.S. at the beginning of 9th grade." Aside from serving a diverse, multilingual population, Jessie also shared that her school was a Title I

school comprised of students from over twenty countries. As if learning a new language in a new country was not hard enough, the students at Jessie's school faced additional challenges that were common for international students:

Many of our students have had interrupted formal education and therefore lack literacy in their native languages. They have also experienced great trauma on the journey to the United States from leaving the loved ones who raised them, coming to a new country, and learning a new language (Jessie, personal communication, August 30, 2019).

While Jessie's challenges as a student were different from the ones her students faced, she understood how the obstacles that her students faced could make them feel insecure and disinterested in school; because of this reality, Jessie believed that a pedagogy of self-love was important to impart to her students. Jessie reflected on this concept by stating, "Because, to me, I teach because I want kids to be able to analyze the world and like see themselves and understand the ways in which this world makes us feel insecure so that we can love ourselves a little bit more" (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019). The five core principles of the International School Model⁷, coupled with Jessie's belief about self-love as a pedagogical concept, cultivated learning experiences in her classroom focused on student voice, creativity, criticality, and the promotion of self-love.

In Classroom Activism: Performance Creativity and Voice

Jessie was cognizant of the need for an integrated curricular approach to content and language acquisition for her EB and multilingual (ML) students. She wrote, "Because all our students are English Language Learners, one of our school-wide goals is to integrate language and content" (Jessie, personal communication, August 30, 2019). One of the ways that Jessie's

⁷ The International school model incorporates five core principles: heterogeneity and collaboration, experiential learning, language, and content integration, localized autonomy and one learning model for all.

in-class activism manifested itself was by promoting oral language and literacy development through creativity. Students often engaged in activities such as storytelling, playwriting, music, dance, and dramatic improv. Jessie elaborated on how her creative approach to language and literacy development aligned with the beliefs of her school. She emphasized:

My school believes that language skills are most effectively learned in context. I believe teaching storytelling and acting produce a language-rich, purposeful, experiential study for my students. Both their lack of literacy and intense life experiences make storytelling and acting a great outlet for them to express themselves emotionally and orally without the pressure of pen and paper. (Jessie, personal communication, August 30, 2019).

Jessie's performance-based approach to language and literacy teaching and learning exemplified her asset-based beliefs about her students and their ability to play an integral part in their own learning. Jessie's continuous pursuit to reimagine new ways for students to creatively express themselves while still meeting the expectations of her school's curricular expectations can be seen as evidence of Jessie's teacher activism. As Jessie stated later in this portrait, part of being a teacher activist is being able to reimagine a better world. Jessie has shown her commitment to this ideology through her pedagogical choices for curriculum and assessment.

Although Jessie's school took a performance-based approach to assessment, Jessie used the performance-based assessment tasks (PBATs) that students needed for grade-level advancement and graduation to promote pedagogies of self-love further. Jessie provided an example of how she centered students' voices and experiences in preparing to complete their personal statements, one of five PBATs required for her students' graduation requirements. Jessie wrote:

I teach 11th and 12th grade English and social studies. In my English class, I teach two significant projects: playwriting and storytelling, to help them learn to express themselves, analyze literature, and strengthen their public speaking skills. In our playwriting unit, I have seen that my students love bringing their characters and stories to life through acting and performing. In my storytelling and personal statement unit, they are inspired to process their lives, tell their truths, and share a part of themselves with their community and colleges. Their personal statement is one of the five PBATs that they need to present to graduate. After attending the 2017 Dragonfly⁸ Teacher Institute, I changed the way I teach the unit. Now, they present their personal statement by telling it without reading from their paper. This change has helped them take ownership of their work and build their confidence as a presenter (Jessie, personal communication, August 30, 2019).

Jessie used a required assessment task as an opportunity to build students' confidence as writers and presenters. She noted how important it was for young people to develop these skills, especially as emergent bilingual immigrant youth. Jessie asserted, "This is a critical time for us to nurture immigrant voices, and I have seen the power of storytelling through my work as a Dragonfly Storytelling Club advisor." In line with promoting student agency, Jessie highlighted how the Dragonfly program served as a transformative pedagogical tool for her and her young people; the program served as a catalyst for her students to be confident and bold. Jessie proudly explained, "Our Dragonfly program has transformed timid, insecure teenagers into confident, sassy storytellers" (Jessie, personal communication, August 30, 2019). Jessie's emphasis on developing students' voice and agency through creativity and performance is evidenced in her

⁸ pseudonym

reflections about her work with the Dragonfly program. Thus, Jessie's notion of teacher activism involved creating learning opportunities to center her students' immigrant voices and confidence as writers and orators.

Jessie's participation in professional development was a key aspect of her use of self-love pedagogies focused on promoting student voice, student agency, and creativity. Much of the evidence from this section was gleaned from a grant proposal that Jessie wrote to secure professional learning opportunities that would be transformative for herself and her students. Jessie's commitment to seeking professional development aligned with her pedagogical beliefs while also providing tangible resources for herself, her students, and the larger school community serves as another indicator of her in-classroom activism. Through Jessie's continuous search for innovative ways to improve her practice, she creates more possibilities for her students to learn how to express themselves and see themselves in new and exciting ways; in many ways, achieving Jessie's goal of helping students "love themselves a little bit more" (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019). Jessie's professional development experiences and their impact on her teacher activism will be explored within the outside of classroom activism section of this portrait.

Developing Criticality to Fight Against Oppressive Systems

It was important for Jessie's students to develop a critical stance on the interplay of systematic oppression and how they think about themselves and others. In the previous section, I outlined how Jessie created opportunities for her 11th and 12th-grade students to develop their confidence, voices, and creative agency. This section explores how Jessie's beliefs about oppressive systems informed her work with her students, faculty, families, and community organizers.

Jessie correlated the idea that oppression created and reproduced within larger systems, like schools, is connected to the poor treatment of others. Jessie explained, “with teacher activism, we're working in a very oppressive system that makes teachers feel like crap all the time and we fight against each other” (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019). She continued to expound upon this connection by providing examples of systematic oppression, self-image, and the treatment of students: “I know when I feel bad about myself, I go after the students or I'm trying to control everything. I'm deconstructing all the time as well. And I'm like, why do I feel that I need to control you? That's not what teaching is” (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019). Here Jessie offered insight into her meaning-making about teaching; she created a cause-and-effect relationship between how teachers feel about themselves and the impact it has on pedagogical practice. Jessie also shared a point of vulnerability in this quote—she divulged the flaws in her own practice and its impacts on her classroom culture. When Jessie expressed how she is “deconstructing all the time,” she provided a glimpse into her reflective practice and her openness to reflecting on how macro and microstructures can shape how educators and students learn and grow together.

One way that Jessie thought she could help her students fight against systems of oppression was to develop their critical thinking and reasoning skills. Part of Jessie's activism work with her students was providing students with opportunities to analyze power structures and question how these systems influence who we are and how we feel about ourselves. To Jessie, she defined a critical thinker as someone who is “able to critique the system and envision something better—to be creative is to see something that isn't there” (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019). Jessie's conceptions of critical thinking aligned with critical theorists such as Freire (2004), bell hooks (1994), and Duncan-Andrade (2009). Jessie's reliance

on students' abilities to both interrogate how large systems and the institutions within them can oppress others while also creating space for students to reimagine a better alternative was evidence of Jessie's commitment to problem-posing education (Freire, 2004) and critical hope (Duncan-Andrade, 2009).

Jessie realized her goal to develop her students as critical thinkers in many ways. She employed a critical lens to teaching her students about the history and grassroots movements. While she thought it was important to instruct students about the effects of systematic oppression, Jessie also saw the power behind exposing her young people to dynamic individuals who have enacted change. Jessie expressed the importance of helping students connect the legacy of grassroots activism and the work that is still being done today. She gave an example of how she would draw parallels between the accomplishments of Black women during the Civil Rights Movement and those of Black women who began the #MeToo movement. Jessie asserted, "Right now, in our world, we need young folks who can see things that are not there, who can learn from the past, see how powerful and beautiful their past is and how it's not just a bunch of dead white men" (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019). This quote conveys Jessie's pedagogical strategy to teach her diverse group of young people about the historic roots of activism with the hope that they will see themselves as agents of change. Within this critical historical approach to teaching, Jessie also emphasized the importance of teaching her young people about unsung heroes, with the help of others, fighting against personal, structural, and systemic oppression. Jessie explained this idea by giving examples of how she used the historical roles of Black women during the Civil Rights Movement to teach them lessons of resiliency and activism:

The accomplishments of the Civil Rights Movement [were made] not just [by] Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, but the grassroots [people] like Joy Robinson and the Women's Political Council—all the people that made [up the movement]. Rosa Parks was working with women like Recy Taylor, who were victims of sexual violence. And so actually, the whole Montgomery Bus boycott was like a strike against sexual violence. It was the beginning [of] the movement—like the “Me-Too” movement, [it] started with a Black woman; and they've been fighting against sexual violence from the beginning of this country. (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019)

Here Jessie explained how she assists her students in learning about their history and the history of the United States while also creating opportunities for her young people to interrogate this history and find ways to add to the rooted legacy of a grassroots activist in the present.

To summarize this section, I choose to amplify Jessie's words on the necessity to educate young people about the strong activist legacy in history and ways to uncover and disrupt the corrosive effects of oppression on individuals and systems. She stressed this point by reiterating:

I think it's important for us to see all the different people who've made change—all the accomplishments and people [who] have done amazing things. Again, we had that in us. We can understand each other and stop [seeking] progress by oppressing each other. Because [when] we feel insecure, we bully the kids. Kids bully other kids because they feel bad about themselves. (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019)

Jessie then reflected on how this cycle has played out in her own personal and professional life. Akin to how Jessie wanted her students to interrogate how oppressive symptoms impact people and their treatment of others, she also engaged in the same reflective process herself. Jessie recalled, “I'm sure when I was a kid, I said homophobic things against kids because I didn't want

people to think I was gay. [If] we can undercut people's insecurities, then I think we can make them much better people” (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019). From this reflection, Jessie harkened back to how essential pedagogies of self-love are to her work as an educator. Jessie’s continued push for teachers and students to continuously unveil and dismantle oppressive systems was grounded in what she believed is one of the most important purposes of education, the promotion of self-love. In the next section, I explore aspects of Jessie’s out-of-classroom activism, comprised of both school-based and community-based activism.

On many occasions, school personnel hold events for parents without carefully considering the needs of their students and their families. Additionally, schools are often required to engage parents in the decision-making processes for the school. Yet, many families are included in school policy spaces out of compliance rather than the pursuit of meaningful collaboration. Jessie found this true in her school’s approach to parent engagement and parent empowerment. She believed that students, teachers, and parents should be afforded genuine opportunities to learn and lead within the school community. Jessie named this form of engagement empowering:

To me, empowering means to one, bring them [students] to the table. Most of the time, and I'm guilty of this throughout my teaching career, I assume I know what is best and I bring it to them. I'll never ask them, what do you want to learn? What afterschool activities do you want? Parents, what do you do? Should we have cell phones? How should we be allocating our budget? We have a school leadership team and a collaborative education plan for the school; the empowerment, I think, comes in [by] putting the money and the resources into developing the skills and the understanding for

people to participate in an authentic way. (Jessie, personal communication, October 2, 2019).

Here, Jessie's desire to develop criticality to fight against oppressive symptoms was geared toward parent empowerment. This suggested that Jessie is communicating that parents cannot sincerely have a proverbial "seat at the table," if their voices are not centered. Jessie espoused the belief that with more financial and human capital allocation, Parents and students alike would be better equipped to fully participate in decision processes at the school. Drawing upon the activist legacy of other grassroots movements, Jessie saw the power of having parents and students more represented in school policymaking. Jessie's activism was characterized by her continuous push to strengthen "parent power" and "student power," which were two terms that were commonly used in Jessie's activist communities mentioned later in this portrait. The upcoming section on Jessie's out-of-classroom activism experiences describes how Jessie attempted to disrupt this hegemonic approach to school leadership by advocating and creating opportunities for shared professional learning and leadership experiences.

Outside of Classroom Experiences that Influenced Activism

One of the most challenging parts of recounting Jessie's teacher activism was the vast number of roles and collaborative projects she was involved in. Jessie served in numerous capacities in her school community, some of which were highlighted in the previous section. She has also been instrumental in organizing students, families, and educators both inside and outside her school. Due to the parameters of this study, I have chosen to focus on Jessie's out-of-classroom activism that centers on her creation of shared spaces for education stakeholders to learn and lead alongside one another; these cocreated spaces include Jessie's work with her students that impacted the larger school community, PD experiences for students and families,

and her work as a restorative justice leader. It is important to reiterate that the activist work captured in this portrait provides only a glimpse into the breadth of activist work Jessie engaged in; this a testament to Jessie's deep-rooted commitment to teacher activism.

Creating Shared Spaces for Learning and Leadership

At the time of this study, a large portion of Jessie's activism was centered around creating inclusive learning spaces and shared leadership opportunities. For example, when Jessie submitted her grant proposal for improv classes to the Fund for Teachers, she stressed the importance of this opportunity for herself, her students, and her entire school community. Jessie intended to have a professional development experience that would have a lasting impact on all school community members. She proposed storytelling and improvisation experiences that would build confidence and community in her school:

Storytelling and theater games are a great way to build trust and relationships among staff. I would love to lead my coworkers through parts of my curriculum. Through presenting my work and facilitating workshops with my staff, I will gain more experience teaching teachers which could lead to more opportunities for me in the future. (Jessie, personal communication, August 30, 2019)

Building trusting relationships among her colleagues was an intended goal of Jessie's proposal. This quote evidenced Jessie's willingness to being a teacher leader in promoting a positive school climate among faculty and staff. Aside from the benefits that Jessie's grant approval would afford students and her colleagues, Jessie also wanted to use her newfound experiences to lead parent workshops. In essence, Jessie wanted to include parents in the trust and community-building process:

My school focuses on restorative justice to solve conflicts that arise, but to do this effectively, we need to build trust and relationships so that we have something to restore. Sharing stories and creating improv in our community would be a great way to build trust. I would also love to run a parent version of a storytelling workshop at a PTA meeting. It would build an understanding of their children's curriculum while also supporting the immigrant community. (Jessie, personal communication, August 30, 2019)

By incorporating storytelling, a literacy practice that is used across cultures and languages, Jessie proposed a way to extend her school's restorative justice efforts to the students' families. She aimed to include parents in their children's education by presenting the school's curriculum in an accessible and legalese-free approach. Jessie also wanted the families to be active participants in the school community, where they could add the culture of trust and relationships that Jessie was inspired to promote among staff and students. Notably, Jessie closed that section of the proposal by centering the largely immigrant parent body, which alludes to Jessie's beliefs that school communities should be open to including parents in school affairs and learning from parents in genuine and thoughtful ways.

Although Jessie communicated having support from her principal for some of her activist ventures, Jessie expressed a disconnect between her principal's professed anti-racist stance and her actions around embracing full inclusion of students and families, which would bring the school closer to meeting its intended goals of their restorative justice initiative. Jessie provided a concrete example of how the traditional models of school leadership were upheld despite the tenets of restorative justice call for more community-based experiences for students and families focused on the acquisition and further development of skills needed for shared leadership:

[Students] have to be part of our RJ action team. We have the school culture committee, and these students will be a part of that too. We have a lot of committees; one thing I've been really trying to push forward and to focus on is bringing our students to the [Restorative Justice] convention and parents because we have never done so. *To me, we, my school, my principal talks about how to be an anti-racist-but to me, I'm going to be anti-racist. [Believing] in our students, believing in their power, believing in our parents. Taking the time to invest in them being in Texas. If we don't do that, we're actually just reproducing what society does all the time. It's basically dismissing their value and their knowledge and the resources that they bring to actually improve education [emphasis added].* (Jessie, personal communication, October 2, 2019)

In what was recorded as a passionate and earnest dissent to the reproduction of the status quo, Jessie showed the strength of her convictions in realizing the ideas of being an anti-racist in word and action.

Jessie did not disclose whether her students and families were able to attend the restorative justice conference. Regardless of the outcome of this disconnect with her principal, Jessie did not give up on her intentions to empower students and families to lead. My first field visit with Jessie was at a rally; she and I were supposed to meet for a rally in support of culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogical approaches for city public students in grades K-12. I participated in the greater portion of the rally without Jessie because she and her young people were co-presenting at a nearby restorative justice conference. As I waited for her, I had the opportunity to experience what “parent power” and “student power” looked like; these were two of many chants that I, along with the massive crowd, bellowed on the steps of a government building. When Jessie arrived, it was the tail-end of the rally, and she was without her students. Still, her invite to

the rally provided me with a rich understanding of what shared leadership within a restorative justice community could look and sound like. I conclude this section on Jessie’s out-of-classroom activism, with her works as a restorative justice coordinator for her school.

To close this section, I introduce an artifact—the first and only artifact in this portrait. Jessie’s thick description of her restorative justice work was captured in her interview responses. Figure 22 provides a unique opportunity to “see” Jessie’s work in action, as evidenced by excerpts from a restorative circle that Jessie organized for a male student who had been suspended from school after engaging in a fight. The excerpts emphasize the importance of repairing the harm committed by a male student while simultaneously signaling to him that he is an integral part of the community and is missed when he is not at school (see Figure note for further detail).

Figure 22: Notes From a Welcome Back Restorative Circle

Circle	Welcome Back	Post Circle Notes	Jose was very reluctant to do the circle. He seemed very conflicted about the process. After he finally came to the room to do the circle, he was still slow to participate. However, he came around after hearing how people missed him and what they liked about him.
Facilitator	[Redacted]	Post Circle Next Steps	Jose's two goals are to come early to school and to not fight in school. Some obstacles he has in meeting his goals are... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He goes to sleep too late • He needs to stop playing video games • He needs to find other ways to solve his problems other than fighting Here's how his community will support him. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jose's sister, [Redacted] will help him build decision-making skills and explore other ways to problem solve. • [Redacted] will be there for him to talk to if he thinks he is going to have a fight. She will also track his lateness and when he is on time a few days in a row he will call home. • His sister, [Redacted] can wake him up. [Redacted] will talk to her. • [Redacted] will check-in with him when he looks angry or sad. • [Redacted] will talk to people rather than using violence • He will also stop playing games by 11 and will go to bed by 1am
Advisory	[Redacted]		
Time	7th Period on Monday, September 16th		
Room	424		
Participants	[Redacted] [Redacted] [Redacted] [Redacted]		
What happened?	He was suspended.		
Possible Outcomes	To come up with a support plan for Jose and help him attach more to his advisory and classmates.		
Protocol	Welcome Back / Support Circle		

Note: The text within the colored circle illustrates a fundamental shift in the meeting for the student being welcomed back to the community. Jessie wrote, “Jose was very reluctant to do the circle. He seemed very conflicted about the process. After, he finally came to the room to do the circle. He was still slow to participate. However, he came around after hearing how people missed him and what they liked about him.”

This artifact exemplified how Jessie used her work to foster a community-based approach to restoring relationships among students, humanizing her students, and normalizing their ability to make mistakes and repair them within a safe and welcoming community. When I asked Jessie

about another incident when law enforcement entered the school building and arrested fifteen teens accused of being involved in off-campus fight, she acknowledged that the young people had caused harm, but she also centered on their humanity:

It has been really hectic. We had the police department come in and they arrested 15 of our students. They jumped another student. I'm the part time RJ [Restorative Justice] coordinator. I'm very involved in this as well . . . It's very complex. From our perspective, we hear their stories. We hear how they got wrapped up into it. The police don't. They don't hear their narrative and it's complicated. At the same time, you see these horrible things, but then you also know how horrible things happen. Great people do horrible things all the time. (Jessie, personal communication, May 19, 2019)

Part of being a member of a restorative justice circle is being receptive to acknowledging hurt and wrongdoing while also embracing the possibility to repair what was broken and reimagine something different. Jessie's work with her young people as a restorative justice coordinator helps her, alongside her students, to go through this restorative process and reimagine something new. The upcoming section sheds light on Jessie's uncertainty in her place as a union activist. She was a member of the traditional rank-and-file teachers' union and the union's caucus, a grassroots extension of the former organization. Below, I examine Jessie's conceptions of collective activism and how to further reflection has brought her to a pivotal point in deciding what will come next in union activism.

Shared Purpose for Teacher Unionism

As I previously expressed, it was difficult for me to capture the essence of Jessie's union activism from the conversations we had and the artifacts that were shared. During a member check, Jessie provided more insight into how her relationship with and thinking around teacher

unionism has shifted since the start of the study. Jessie shared her inner conflict around being a rank-and-file union organizer while simultaneously being a social justice activist for predominantly Black and Brown students. This tension Jessie expressed made sense to me because I had a difficult time analyzing this aspect of Jessie's out of classroom activism. Through further discussion with Jessie during a member check, Jessie reflected on why she has been struggling with her political activism as of late; she described the tensions between teachers unions' accountability and the impact these allegiances have on Black and Brown youth. Jessie also reflected on the lack of a shared purpose for schooling by educators and unions to which they belong. Since being on sabbatical this school year, Jessie credited having more time and space to think about her place as a teacher activist in a rank-and-file union and the reasons why she has felt less connected to that aspect of her teacher activism.

Having a shared vision for the purposes of schooling was a central issue for Jessie as a teacher and teacher activist. She stated, "A capitalist society gets students ready for the workforce rather than self-love" (Jessie, personal communication, November 24, 2021). Jessie prefaced her conversation about her struggles with rank-and-file teacher union organizing, including her involvement in the union's caucus, with the statement "If rank-and-file teachers' unions are accountable to their members and teachers are products of schooling, where being smart is most important, then the best interests of students and families cannot be served by the union." Here Jessie raises the contradictory nature of teachers' unions. If teachers' unions aim to support their members, who uphold more oppressive forms of schooling (i.e., standardized testing, teacher-centered instruction, etc.), then the goals of teachers' unions are antithetical to needs of the diverse students and families in the communities in which the teachers teach. This realization has led Jessie to grapple with her subsequent out-of-school activism. She is

considering how the grassroots rank-and-file leg of the traditional teacher's union, the union's caucus, which she helped to create in her city, could become less politicized. Jessie explained, "My [union activism] does not have to cast a wide net; not all teachers need to be a part of it [grassroots unionism]" (Jessie, personal communication, November 24, 2021). Instead, Jessie believes that her grassroots teacher's union should focus on including students and their families in conversations about school policy, asking them what they want from their schools. She also saw setting a union agenda that is working toward forming a shared purpose for schooling as a larger priority for grassroots unionism rather than the current political agendas and the fight to have all educators participate in this form of activism.

Reflection as Privilege

I was pleasantly surprised when Jessie agreed to participate in this study. She was an experienced educator and teacher activist with publications and a wide network of teacher activists and scholar-activists. What I found to be most interesting about Jessie, along with the other three participants in the study, was her eagerness to have the time to reflect on her practice, to reflect on her life, and the opportunity to have that moment in time recorded. Jessie summarized these ideas best when she explained the benefits of her participation in the study: "Reflection is also a privilege. We don't reflect on our lives; it's like go, go, go. To be able to just sit here and talk to you and think, yeah, this happened in my life. It's nice and it makes us better human beings because we reflect and think and learn from our past" (Jessie, personal communication, May 16, 2019). During our last phone conversation, Jessie had been on a year-long sabbatical. Jessie's sabbatical provided her with the time and space to reflect on her union activism and what she believed were the purposes of schooling. With more time to be more involved in her daughter's education, Jessie and her partner decided to change their daughter's

school. They found that their child was rewarded with a point system for being quiet and compliant.

Jessie critiqued this approach to education that her daughter was experiencing; she asserted, “Capitalist society gets students ready for the workforce.” This means-to-an-end approach to schooling was the antithesis of Jessie’s self-love pedagogy. While simultaneously reflecting on her role as a teacher activist both inside and outside her classroom. In collaboration with her partner, Jessie was also figuring out what kind of education she wanted for her ownchild. Jessie wanted the same education results for her students that she wanted for her daughter—an education centered around creativity, criticality, student/family agency, and most importantly, self-love.

Conclusion

Kevin, Glenda, Mar-y-Sol, and Jessie were four different educators from different walks of life, yet their love of teaching young people connected them, an orientation toward activism, and a commitment to ensuring that emergent bilingual students receive the robust educational and life experiences they deserve. Through their activism within their classrooms and in the larger community, Kevin, Glenda, Mar-y-Sol, and Jessie continue to fight against the coloniality of power in the education of emergent bilingual youth. These four activists center on the lived experiences of their culturally and linguistically diverse students and work to dismantle systemic power structures that marginalize racialized emergent bilingual learners. Rosa and Flores (2017) argued that understanding a raciolinguistic perspective must include an “analysis of the continued articulation of colonial distinctions between Europeanness and non-Europeanness—and, by extension, whiteness, and non-whiteness” (p. 622). The participants in this study pushed against oppressive policies, curricula, and ideologies supporting their students’ right to their own language, culture, and the presence of their full humanity both in and out of school. In the final

chapter of this dissertation, I revisit my research questions by identifying and explaining the themes that I gleaned from my data analysis. I follow this detailed analysis with an introspective reflection on how my attempts at being an anticolonial researcher shaped my positionality during all stages of the dissertation process. Chapter 5 concludes with implications for teacher education and teacher development. I also provide recommendations for teacher activists' recruitment, development, and retention for emergent bilingual youth.

Chapter 5: Discussion

When I began this dissertation study, I sought to understand better what informed the decision-making of teacher activists of emergent bilingual youth and how those decisions impacted the pedagogical moves teacher activists of emergent made bilingual learners made inside and outside of their classrooms. These research questions arose from my experiences as a teacher of emergent bilingual youth; throughout my experience, I struggled to move my practice past the confines of my classroom and school building even though issues of race, language, and power were influencing the lives of my young learners and their families. This dissertation grew from my reflexive practice as an educator and the need for educational research that put issues impacting emergent bilingual youth and the audacious work of educators who teach them at the forefront of the education agenda.

In this chapter, I present the themes that I found by analyzing the four teacher activist portraits and feedback from the teacher activists portrayed in the study. The first theme explores how the educators' beliefs, identities, and experiences converged to create their dispositions toward teacher activism. I propose that these activist dispositions informed the pedagogical choices aligned with more liberatory educational philosophies. Theme two examines the teacher activists' critical awareness of raciolinguistic ideologies that the participants evidenced in their

interviews and artifacts. They exhibited a keen awareness of how the interplay of language, race, and power impacted the lives of their emergent bilingual learners. The third central theme illustrates how the teacher activists in this study facilitated culturally sustaining pedagogies in their classrooms; these pedagogies took on many different forms and representations, but all were aligned with Paris and Alim's (2017) definition of culturally sustaining pedagogies. To conclude the findings section of this chapter, I discuss the fourth and final theme of the study, which delves into the dynamic relationship between the teacher activists' social and political activism and their pedagogical moves within the classroom. These educators' social and political activism informed classroom practices and served as extensions of teacher activists' beliefs, identities, and experiences. Following the explication of the major themes of this study, I further explore how my role as a novice anticolonial researcher shaped the development of this dissertation and my relationships with the teacher activists in this study. This chapter concludes with implications for prominent educational spheres of influence based on the findings of this dissertation study.

The Composition of Teacher Activist Dispositions

Teacher education programs stress the importance of identifying and assessing teacher dispositions because these dispositions can serve as predictors of a teacher's readiness to teach diverse learners (Fonseca-Chacana, 2019; Stephens, 2019; Villegas, 2007; Warren et al., 2022). To better understand what impacted the decision-making of the four teacher activists in this study, I investigated the unique connection between their activist work inside and outside of the classroom and who these activists were (identities), what they believed (conceptions), and the experiences they encountered (lived experiences). I postulate that these educators' conceptions, identities, and lived experiences converged to create a teacher activist disposition. I found that

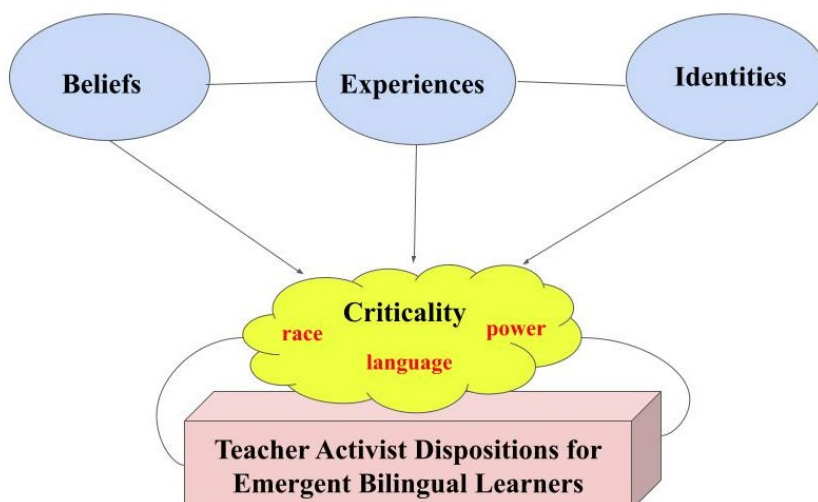
Kevin, Glenda, Mar-y-Sol, and Jessie embodied a teacher activist disposition or the tendency and/or inclination to act for socially-just and liberatory outcomes (Mills et al., 2019; Sachs, 2001; Villegas, 2007). I argue that their activist dispositions have been and continue to be shaped by their identities, experiences, and beliefs about the purposes of education and the contributions of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Consistent with Picower's (2012b) first commitment in her framework for teacher activism, "reconciling the vision," teacher activists viewed their role as educators is twofold: to promote a more socially just world and to fight against systemic inequality, I found that the teacher activists in this study also shared this vision of an educator's role. All four teacher activists possessed dispositions for teaching that aligned with activism. They believed that teaching and activism were inherently connected and that shared power and collective decision-making were important aspects of teaching and activism. For instance, when I asked each teacher activist why they became teachers of emergent bilingual youth, some referred to the need for a career that could provide job security and financial stability. In contrast, others spoke of teaching as an opportunity for social uplift from living in poverty to entering the middle class. I found these reasons to be like why many professionals seek out a career. What stood out as a common thread across all four teacher activists' reasons for becoming teachers of EBLs was their emphasis on how becoming a teacher would provide them the opportunity to counter injustice, give back to the communities they felt connected to, and continue to foster the love of self, community, and language. We can be reminded of Kevin's desire to "do [his] best to serve the needs of children growing up in [his] city [and] give them opportunities that I did not have access to" and Mar-y-Sol's assertion that her presence as a "Brown woman" in a district where over "80% of teachers are" which was highlighted in Chapter 4. Whether clearly articulated or deduced from our verbal and written exchanges, these

four educators viewed teaching and activism as inherently interconnected. Thus, serving as a teacher activist for emergent bilingual students was not viewed as an additional task but one that was integral to their roles as educators. I wanted to understand why these teacher activists held these beliefs about teaching and activism. By closely examining the composition of teacher activist dispositions and how they might inform their activism for and with emergent bilingual youth, I concluded that their dispositions toward teaching as activism helped to shape their decisions made inside and outside of their classrooms.

To further explore the activist dispositions of the educators in this study, it is important to unpack how these teacher activists' identities and experiences shaped their beliefs about teacher activism. Quan et al. (2019) posited that "Teachers' professional and pedagogical identities intersect with one's personal and social identities" (p. 220). The interconnected nature of the identities of the teacher activists in this study informed how these educators conceptualized their work inside and outside of their classrooms and their motivations to become change agents for emergent bilingual youth. Kevin, Mar-y-Sol, and Jessie shared some demographic similarities with their students. For example, Kevin felt connected to his students because they were mainly Black and Brown students from his city; he also felt more connected to teaching emergent bilingual students because Kevin was a Garifuna or a Black Honduran. Mar-y-Sol was an emergent bilingual student as a child; she connected with her students' struggle to be seen as bilingual and bi-literate. Mar-y-Sol also shared how her family's socioeconomic status shaped her childhood experiences and would later motivate her to become a bilingual teacher. Finally, Jessie saw herself in some of her students, having struggled through school as a child due to low expectations from adults and irrelevant educational experiences. Jessie found her academic struggles to be a way to connect with her emergent bilingual youth in her newcomer high school,

who often struggle with learning a new language, culture, and education system. Glenda did not share most of the lived experiences of her students. Still, through her experiences as a language teacher abroad and her ability to critically examine her privilege, she developed a teacher activist disposition for emergent bilingual youth. From my analysis of the data, I concluded that these four teacher activists' experiences, beliefs, and identities are filtered through a critical examination of issues of race, language, and power to shape their teacher activist identity. Figure 1 illustrates how I believe teacher activist dispositions for emergent bilingual youth are forged. I argue that these teacher activists for emergent bilingual youth develop dispositions for activism because they have well-developed critical thinking skills around issues of power and how their identities, beliefs, and experiences can both privilege and oppress young people.

Figure 23: Formation of Teacher Activist Dispositions for Emergent Bilingual Learners



Criticality of the Intersectionality Race, Language, and Power

In Chapter Two, I unpacked how the remnants of colonialism are still present and at work in present-day society. These pervasive yet masked power dynamics, which are informed by the theory of coloniality of power, are evident in each of the four portraits. More acutely, Glenda's and Mary-y-Sol's portraits provide tangible examples of how coloniality of power is at play during these women's childhood experiences and their later decisions when becoming teacher

activists. Although these two women had never met, their lived experiences existed in dialogue with one another through this study. Mar-y-Sol, an Afro-Latinx woman from a working-class family, had to fight to relearn and maintain her first language, Spanish, throughout her education. In contrast, Glenda, a White Jewish woman from an upper-middle-class family had multiple opportunities to learn many languages, including Spanish, both in and outside of school. Glenda and Mar-y-Sol were drawn to their work due to their love of language, language teaching, and keeping spaces for language learning accessible to all students. In many ways, Mar-y-Sol described Glenda's privilege in being afforded opportunities to become multilingual. I recount from Mar-y-Sol's portrait:

I literally sat in middle school. They asked for somebody to translate something. I had a White classmate in the lunchroom say, "Oh yeah, I went to dual-language. I know how to translate that." I'm looking (sic) like I speak Spanish. *And I was like, I don't know how to translate. I don't know how to say it, but the White girl did. The privileged White girl did because when you're rich and White, it's valuable. But when you're Brown and poor, we make you an ELL* [emphasis added]. (Mar-y-Sol, personal communication, July 16, 2019)

Mar-y-Sol described how a "White girl" like Glenda was afforded the privilege to be bilingual. Glenda, on the other hand, described a more privileged experience in learning languages and developing a multilingual identity. Glenda spoke about her multilingual identity as extensions of herself. This excerpt from her portrait provides an example of this:

I speak Spanish fluently. I feel bilingual [in Spanish] to the point that I have a personality. I know myself in that language. . . Except for Portuguese, I was taught formally in the school setting, but I didn't get a personality in Spanish until I moved to Spain. I lived in Peru and Spain for a while and that was for the purpose of me finally

getting better at this language that I have been studying for so long. (Glenda, personal communication, July 21, 2019)

The contrast between how Mar-y-Sol described her Spanish identity and how Glenda described her Spanish identity is steeped in oppressive roots of coloniality. These examples from Mar-y-Sol's and Glenda's portraits provide evidence for how race, language, and power interact with one another. Raciolinguistics (Flores & Rosa, 2015) is a linguistic theory of analysis that can help to explain how the remnants of colonialism have become embedded in language education. In the next paragraph, I briefly review raciolinguistics and how the teacher activists' critical language awareness informed their activism for emergent bilingual youth.

In a 2016 interview, linguistic anthropologist, H. Samy Alim, explained to his interviewer why raciolinguistics is important to the field of education. He explained:

Raciolinguistics examines how language shapes race and how race shapes language. It's a field that grew out of a need to understand that there is a close relationship between race, racism, and language and how these processes impact our lives across domains like politics and education. (Shashkevich, 2016, para. 27)

The experiences that Glenda and Mar-y-Sol recounted in their portraits emphasized how race, racism, and language are experienced by students of color and White students, as well as the economically disadvantaged and the economically privileged. Racialized language learning experiences do not exist within a vacuum. Rosa (2020) argued the importance of understanding raciolinguistic ideologies as a "colonial coproduction of race and power" (6:30–7:26). Mar-y-Sol's and Glenda's raciolinguistic experiences were grounded in the origins of colonialism and continue to be reproduced in the lived experiences of their students because of the coloniality of power. Flores and Rosa (2015) asserted that "The framework of raciolinguistic ideologies allows

us to push even further by examining not only the “eyes” of whiteness but also its “mouth” and “ears” (p. 151). Here is where I believe Glenda’s and Mar-y-Sol’s portraits converge through their disentanglement of how race, language, and privilege are operationalized in their lives and the lives of their students. Glenda and Mar-y-Sol were drawn to their work due to their love of language, language teaching, and keeping spaces for language learning accessible to all students. Mar-y-Sol’s adavance in being a model of a transformative bilingual educator of color, her students and her profession, and her commitment to the promotion of Indigenous ways of knowing are indicators of her ability to reveal the presence of coloniality and expose the “mouths” and “ears” of Whiteness in language education. Glenda used her dissonance in reconciling her linguistic privilege with the marginalization of her emergent bilingual learners to create instruction that privileged the language and culture of her students and their families; she also pushed herself and others to examine the “mouths” and “ears” of Whiteness through political action for dual-language programming. As mentioned in the previous section, teacher activists of emergent bilingual youth have diverse backgrounds that inform their proclivity to become; arguably, their willingness to examine and resist deficit-based raciolinguistic ideologies in their practice motivates them to act. Teacher activists' use of culturally sustaining pedagogies and active resistance to deficit-based raciolinguistic ideologies help to uncover and derail the presence of coloniality in educational experiences for EBLs. In the next section, I transition to the discussion of the different kinds of classroom pedagogies that the four teacher activists enacted within traditional classroom settings and community-based learning spaces.

Teacher Activists Employ Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies

Building on Picower’s (2012b) second commitment to teacher activism, “moving toward liberation,” I found that the teacher activists in this study valued the creation of caring

relationships in their classroom. They fostered classroom communities that were “for the culture⁹,” or spaces where actions that the teacher activists and their students valued were welcomed. Kevin brought his expertise in hip-hop pedagogy and his belief in his students’ individual and collective greatness, regardless of their English proficiency level, to his third-grade classroom. Glenda created a unit where her student, cousins, and family members could be the “stars” by sharing their knowledge, expertise, and experiences with her first-grade dual-language learners. Mar-y-Sol centered on Indigenous ways of knowing in her dual-language classroom by integrating restorative justice practices and socioemotional learning practices into the daily routine of her students. She positioned bilingualism as an asset in her classroom by providing opportunities for children to read, write, and speak in Spanish during core assignments and bringing community educators into the process of educating her young learners about BIPOC culture and traditions. Finally, Jessie employed pedagogies of self-love and creativity to help her emergent bilingual newcomers build their confidence and find their voice in her ESL classroom (Jaffe-Walter & Lee, 2018); students used storytelling, improv, and poetry to share their knowledge and individuality in a language that was new to them. Each of these teacher activists strived for a more democratic and liberatory educative process for their students. The literature frames these approaches in many ways. Scholars have written about the work that teacher activists do in their classrooms as social justice education (Hackman, 2005). Some examples of these frameworks are teacher activist pedagogy (Catone, 2017), culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2018; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), linguistically responsive pedagogy

⁹“For the culture” is a colloquial term that signals that someone is doing an action to benefit a shared cultural experience, which is usually of value to those who belong to said culture. See M. (2018, June 20). *What Does ‘Do It for The Culture’ Mean? Ebro Darden Explains | The Beat with Ari Melber | MSNBC*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dbLCpAXhCI&feature=youtu.be>

(Lucas et al., 2008), and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014). I have chosen to characterize the pedagogical moves of the teacher activists in this study as evidence of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017). Paris and Alim (2017) asserted:

CSP positions dynamic cultural dexterity as a necessary good and sees the outcome of learning as additive rather than subtractive, as remaining whole rather than framed as broken, as critically enriching strengths rather than replacing deficits. Culturally sustain-ing pedagogy exists wherever education sustains the lifeways of communities who have been and continue to be damaged and erased through schooling. (p. 1)

The idea that the use of culturally sustaining pedagogies foregrounds the “life” of traditionally marginalized communities shifts the work of teacher activists from fostering classroom spaces where students’ cultures and languages can exist within spaces of Whiteness; instead, teacher activists daringly co-create spaces with their students for the sustenance of BIPOC and emergent bilingual youth. Through their commitment to using culturally sustaining pedagogies, Kevin, Glenda, Mar-y-Sol, and Jessie challenged the assumptions that their students’ lives, languages, academic aptitude “have no meaning and no depth without the white gaze” (Morrison as cited in Perfect Day Films Inc et al., 2020, 1:41 – 1:51). I illustrate how the four activists in this study co-created learning opportunities “for the culture” rather than being in service of the White Gaze in schooling in the next paragraph.

Each of the participants in this study found ways to promote more liberatory ways of learning in their classrooms. These teacher activists described and provided evidence of the ways they used pedagogies of love (Darder, 2017; Freire, 2004) and radical care (Rivera-McCutchens, 2021) to learn from and with their students. They also relied on their personal and professional backgrounds to advocate for and nurture the presence of shared knowledge and power among

students, families, and members of the community. For example, when Mar-y-Sol's dual-language classroom demographics became increasingly more White and socioeconomically advantaged due to the gentrification of her school's neighborhood and dual-language programs across her city, she challenged herself how to create a classroom environment where her students would change her classroom merely because they were White and advantaged but, more so because it presented Mar-y-Sol with the opportunity to develop her White students' anti-racist lens and allyship in support of social, racial, and linguistic justice for their Black and Brown classmates. This example shows how Mar-y-Sol remained committed to her goal of realizing anti-racist education in her classroom; the presence of more White children in her classroom afforded Mar-y-Sol the opportunity to reconcile the vision (Picower, 2012a, b) of the gentrification of dual-language classrooms (Valdez et al., 2016). Mar-y-Sol immersed her students in Taíno culture with a field trip experience that was largely led by community activists and museum curators; Indigenous ways of problem-solving and conflict resolution using her Peace Path (see Chapter 4), and other forms of restorative justice practices. Finally, her purpose in developing fully bilingual learners did not wane when students entered her classroom with the ability to speak fluently in English, Spanish, and at times, other languages beyond those two. Rather, Mar-y-Sol affirmed her purpose as a bilingual activist of color by saying, "What makes me a teacher activist because I'm teaching my students how to have a voice and how to navigate spaces in their Black and Brown bodies." (M. Toka, personal communication, July 16, 2019)

Kevin and Jessie also exemplified the use of culturally sustaining pedagogies by their use of creativity, the arts, and the reliance on student voice to teach their emergent bilingual learners. Kevin's expertise in hip-hop pedagogical principles helped to transform a reluctant emergent bilingual third grader into a confident MC who could perform his own rhymes for Mr. Kevin, as

the students called him, and his peers. This transformative practice did not rely on Kevin's student's English proficiency level; the goal was for this student to see himself as a writer, a poet, a rapper—a contributor to his classroom. The use of hip-hop awakened this young student's creativity and belief in his writing ability through Kevin's use of a culturally sustaining medium. Like Kevin, Jessie found artistic approaches to learn such as acting and improv as tools of empowerment for her emergent bilingual learners. By removing traditional markers of literacy, such as the over-reliance on pen and paper tasks, Jessie created learning opportunities for her young people to take risks and find their own stories to tell in creative ways. Jessie explained the transformative power of using drama and creative writing with her students in the following quote:

I believe teaching storytelling and acting produce a language-rich, purposeful, experiential study for my students. Both their lack of literacy and intense life experiences make storytelling and acting a great outlet for them to express themselves emotionally and orally without the pressure of pen and paper. (Jessie, August 6, 2019)

The pedagogical moves of each teacher activist in this study can serve as responses to Paris and Alim's (2017) question: "What if the goal of teaching and learning with youth of Color was not ultimately to see how closely students could perform White middle-class norms, but rather was to explore, honor, extend, and, at times, problematize their cultural practices and investments?" (p. 3). The activism enacted by Kevin, Glenda, Mar-y-Sol, and Jessie present real possibilities for sustaining liberatory classroom pedagogies for racialized emergent bilingual youth. The next section delves into the dynamic relationship between the teacher activists in the classroom and out-of-classroom activism and provides some examples of what these forms of activism looked like and how these forms of activism may have developed over time.

The Dynamism of In-Classroom and Out-of-Classroom Activism

The relationship between the participants' in-classroom activism and their out-of-classroom activism was neither isolated nor one-dimensional. I found that the activism that each of the participants engaged in was informed by their work in their classrooms and the work that occurred outside of their classrooms; thus, there was a two-way connection between the teacher activists' in-school pedagogies and their enactment of social and political activism within their schools and the larger community. Despite there being clear evidence of the four activists' in-classroom and out-of-classroom activism, there were still areas where activism took place but could not be confined to one particular space or moment in time. For example, Jessie believed in the shared power and participation of students and families in the educative process. To aid in her actualization of this belief, she secured grants to provide creative arts and creative literary experiences to cultivate her students' voices and build their confidence in using their voices for change. She also worked to create pathways for the families of her international school community to be more civically engaged on both the school and community level by advocating for professional development that would help parents actualize their power in schools. While these forms of activism occurred in school and community spaces, what became less clear was all the points of engagement, criticality, and resistance that occurred between these larger and document events. To account for these very real but less certain forms of activism, I take up the concept of a third space (Bhabha, 2004), somewhere between the forms of activism that took place within the classroom and outside of the classroom. I develop this idea further in the implication section below. These hybrid spaces include but are not limited to lesson planning, conversations with administrators and families and advocacy for and with students, colleagues, and families. For example, Mar-y-Sol found professional learning opportunities that privileged

the contributions of BIPOC communities and built networks of community educators and carefully crafted unit plans, lessons, and experiential learning experiences for her students. Jessie frequently mentioned the conversations she would have with her administrators, students, colleagues, and families about full inclusion of families and students in the decision-making within the school community; these conversations were a part of Jessie's interactions within her school community and activist networks. I argue that through these small moments of resistance, teacher activists engage in activism throughout varying aspects of their work—where the beginnings and ends of these acts of resistance are often hard to ascertain. This supports a more fluid understanding of teacher activism rather than a conception of teacher activism that is fixed and binary. Finally, I found that the teacher activism the participants engaged in was mediated by contextual factors. For instance, Kevin's personal charge to be culturally authentic and have his words match his actions were informed by his hip-hop cultural identity, his upbringing in an urban community, his Black maleness, and countless other factors that brought his hip-hop poetry to life for Kevin's student, David, and his classmates or Kevin's pride in his work in being a community educator and mentor to the youth in his city. I attempt to demonstrate the complexity behind and within the relationship between the types of teacher activism the participants engaged in and the myriad of contextual mediators that influence this relationship in Figure 2.

Whether through social or political activism, or a combination, the educators in this study showed a reliance on shared power and collective activism as defining principles of their teacher activism. The final commitment of Picower's (2012a, b) framework for teacher activism calls for collective teacher activism against oppression. She explained, "To strengthen the impact of teacher activism, social justice educators need to be politically engaged in sustained and

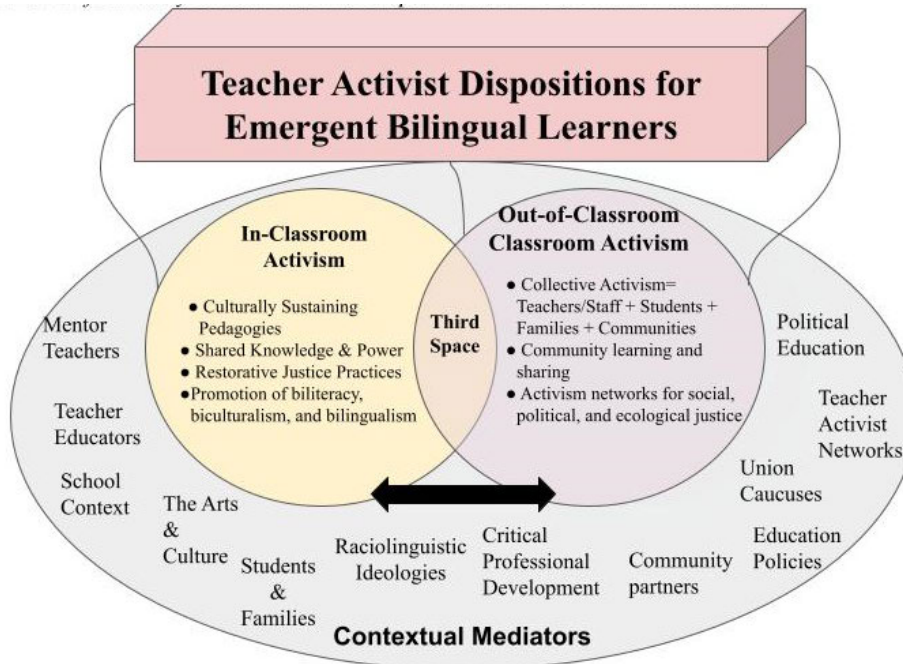
collective ways” (p. 10). One of the ways that teachers showed a reliance on shared power and collective activism to fight against oppression was through union leadership. Jessie and Glenda used their respective teachers’ unions and the social-justice focused union caucuses to fight for material and democratic justice for their students, colleagues, and communities. Jessie harkened back to the grassroots origins of the civil rights movement as way to remind her young people that they have a “powerful and beautiful past” of making change; this belief was evident in Jessie’s active involvement in her union’s socially-justice centered caucus and her collaborative work with teacher activists groups (TAGs) as well as coalitions of intergenerational linguistically and racially diverse organizations around issues of culturally relevant instruction and restorative justice practices for young people. At her core, Jessie believed that change has and will always be made possible by the collective actions of caring and politically engaged people. Although Jessie had a long history of political and social activism, Glenda found her political activism to be a source of support as a new teacher and a vehicle of change for herself and her school community. In the instances where Glenda joined a coalition of educators and families to demand more robust dual-language policies or served as co-building leader to fight for environmental justice within her school building, it was the power of collective action that made her believe that she could impact change in more tangible ways within her classroom, school, and school district. Mar-y-Sol’s and Kevin’s social activism also relied on collective activism and shared power but in more community-ground ways. In essence, their sense of belonging to the same cities and cultures as many of their students grounded their activism within the community. For example, Mar-y-Sol’s intentionality in seeking out the cultural and linguistic wealth of BIPOC communities and in turn, creating shared spaces for students, educators, and families to engage in that learning originated from the deep-rooted experiences that she and

others had to traverse through throughout their lives. Mar-y-Sol's prowess in bringing communal knowledge into the lives of her students exemplified the more ancestral ways of being as she referenced in the Mayan greeting *In La'Kech*. Comparatively, Kevin's out of classroom activism was grounded in a community of "his people." It was Kevin's dutiful obligation to his community that influenced his creation of artistic spaces for young artists or his pride in mentoring young people from his community as a paid employee or a volunteer. For Kevin, his community activism was an extension of himself because he saw the community as family. To emphasize this example, I revisit a quote from an artifact in Kevin's portrait:

Yesterday was one of the most beautiful days of my life. This is by far the strongest group of students, mentors, parents, I've ever met. Despite a pandemic and turbulent racial climate [*sic*] we stuck together and succeeded. College acceptances, awards and scholarships, and a lot of joy on that Zoom call. My mother even got to see this extension of family for the first time. Thank you all for this year. Thank you all for these last five years. I am great because you are. (Kevin, personal communication, June 1, 2020)

Kevin's emphasis on the "we" in the accomplishments of this community and his gratitude for this "extension of his family" beautifully depicts how integral community is to the work of teacher activists.

Figure 24: *Dynamic Relationship Between In Classroom Activism and Out of Classroom Activism Informed by Teacher Activist Dispositions and Contextual Mediators*



Learning and Growing as an Anticolonial Researcher

Anticolonial research methodology is a shared experience built on relationship building, vulnerability, and a willingness to share in the knowledge production and meaning-making throughout the study and beyond. Being in community with the participants in the study as opposed to more transactional approaches where the participants are researched and the researcher benefits from said research. The benefit of trying on an anticolonial methodology for this dissertation study was my ability to examine my research questions as a teacher first; this curiosity to approach the teacher activists as a colleague pedagogy and activism at the onset of the study rather than a researcher gave me the permission to delve into the participants' proudest moments with their students and the activist communities they belonged to. Through my teacher identity, I developed a level of comfort in looking deeper at what I could learn from the participants, which, in turn, would grow into implications for teacher education, teacher development, education research, and my own pedagogy and teacher activism. I entered this

research project with the intentionality of being open and vulnerable with the teacher activists in the study. Feeling more comfortable in my teacher identity, I sought after conversations and experiences that would shed light on the audacious work that these teacher activists were doing and afford myself the opportunity to learn from their teacher activism and pedagogies. Too often, education focuses on what is wrong with teachers and students; this study gave me the opportunity to share all that is right about these activists, their young people, and the communities in which they learn and grow together.

As Patel (2016) asserted in her book *Decolonizing Educational Research*, I worked to create spaces to pause and reflect on my power and my personal interests in conducting this study and engaging these teacher activists. Despite earnest attempts to be a relational researcher, I must still own the fact that this research and the teacher activists' contributions to the study were in partial satisfaction of my doctoral degree. Due to this reality, it was imperative for me to take pause and deliberate care in crafting questions, responding to questions, and sharing my experiences when relevant to promote dialogue rather than traditional Q&A exchange. At the center of anticolonial research are the relationships that are forged and sustained throughout the research project. Besides the rich artifacts and descriptions, the participants shared with me, the most lasting impact for me were the relational aspects of carrying out this dissertation study: meeting the participants' life partners, their children, engaging with the activists' support networks, develop friendships outside of the study, seeking counsel from my teacher activist colleagues/participants for my own students. The relational aspects of anticolonial research methodology added a deeper dimension to this study because it created spaces for critical reflection and authentic dialogue, which I believe, might not have occurred if the participants and I had not invested in building relationships during the study.

I suggested to participants that one of the benefits of being in my study was the opportunity to reflect on one's practice and activism. This benefit turned out to be impactful for both the participants and myself. Through critical reflection (Gorski & Dalton, 2020; Liu, 2013) critical dialogue (Freire, 2004; Matusov & Pease-Alvarez, 2020; Morris, 2017) with the four teacher activists during our interviews, site visits, and correspondence, we created a space to look at their work and have critical conversations about what transpired, what they felt the impact was, and why it was important for these happenings to be shared. To access these critical occurrences in their teaching and activism, the teacher activists had to come to recall key times in their lives and reflect on their practice in ways that illustrated who they were and what they did as teacher activists. This critical reflection opened avenues for the participants and me to think about our work as educators and activists. As I collected and analyzed the data from this study, I was pushed to reflect on my experiences as an educator and my growing experiences as an anticolonial researcher. Through these opportunities for critical reflection, I began to converse with two of the teacher activists beyond the parameters of the study. Kevin and Glenda became two people I would remain in touch with and continue discussing their future goals, present work, and important moments in their lives. Through this study, I grew my community of teacher activists, which was an unpredictable yet welcomed benefit for me in conducting this study.

As a preface to the implications section of this chapter, I found myself reflecting upon the time I spent preparing my proposal for this study. I remember toiling over the three major questions Patel (2016) encouraged researchers to consider: "Why me? Why now? Who now?" (pp. 59–60). To answer these questions, I started with myself, a mid-career P–12 educator who had transferred from numerous public schools because of frustrations and internalized failure in helping students with IEPs and language learning services succeed. I thought about how alone I

felt in seeing how gifted and resilient these young people are in the face of challenges often put in place by the individuals and institutions supposed to support them. As I went through the dissertation research process, I witnessed the separation and detention of children from their families, left to sleep on cold, hard floors with tin foil blankets. The United States had elected a president, who espoused xenophobic viewpoints about race, language, and who belonged, and culturally and linguistically diverse states played legislative tug of war around issues of ethnic studies and English-only instruction for school districts with high numbers of linguistically diverse youth. Finally, I watched the resiliency of educators in collaboration with local community members, protesting and demanding students' rights to safety, culturally relevant instruction, and a right to their own language. When I considered why this study mattered to the various spheres of education, I knew that I wanted to contribute scholarship to the field that amplified the voices of teacher activists and the strengths of their students and communities. I decided that I wanted to recenter emergent bilingual youth as capable and creative thinkers and their teachers as interlocutors of language and the cultural wealth of their students and families. I have learned that being an anticolonial researcher begins with looking for what good can come from my research for the participants and the communities they serve. Through my use of portraits, I learned the importance of creating spaces for creativity and research to coexist. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) described the beauty and complexity of portraiture in qualitative research. She wrote, "I wanted the written pieces to convey the authority, wisdom, and perspective of the 'subjects'; but I wanted them to feel as I had felt, that the portrait did not look like them but somehow managed to reveal their essence" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 6). I hope that this dissertation study honored the participants and what they have shared while also

giving the readers, including myself and the participants, a chance to reflect upon, discuss, and rediscover the “essence” of their work and their contributions to education.

Implications

With this dissertation, I hope to be a part of a paradigm shift in how the work of teacher activists and their emergent bilingual youth are portrayed in many teacher education classrooms, professional development spaces, and education literature. My goal was to contribute to education research literature that did not “pathologize” (Paris & Alim, 2017) Black and Brown emergent bilingual youth; there has been enough literature stating the problems the learners face. Despite the challenges that each participant faced, they persevered and created new possibilities for their emergent bilingual learners through their persistence in employing culturally sustaining pedagogies and participating in collective social and political activism. I wondered what the teacher education community could learn from these four teacher activists in writing this section. How can we support their work? What can researchers, teacher educators, school building administrations, union leaders, and policymakers do to recruit and retain educators like Kevin, Glenda, Mar-y-Sol, and Jessie? After I concluded my second round of data collection, two of the four teacher activists in the study decided to leave the classroom. Kevin, an experienced youth educator with hip-hop pedagogical prowess, did not make it through his residency year. He explained, “They want Black men to teach, but they don’t want us to be ourselves. They want us, but they don’t love us” (Kevin, personal communication, May 16, 2019). Kevin solemnly recounted an incident where he was reprimanded for giving a student too much jelly on a student’s bagel at breakfast. He felt the emphasis was on policing food rationing rather than his ability to mentor his students. Although this is just one example of how Kevin felt his compassion was disregarded as a Black male educator, his words emphasize the

commodification of BIPOC educators without care or concern for their humanity once they enter the profession. Glenda decided to return to the classroom while also working alongside a colleague as a union representative to impact change for the students and the school community.

Development of Activist Dispositions for Teacher Educators and Pre-service Teachers

More emphasis should be placed on developing coursework and aligning teacher education programs around cultivating activist dispositions and teacher activist identities. Numerous studies outline how teacher educators can disrupt hegemonic models of teaching and learning (Jobe & Coles-Ritchie, 2016; Moje et al., 2004; Ratnam, 2020; Taylor & Klein, 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and exacerbated inequities that children face: children experiencing poverty, children with special needs, children of Color, and emergent bilingual children experienced academic and socio-emotional losses compounded by the pandemic (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Teacher candidates must be prepared to interrogate how these children's lives were impacted by multiple forms of oppression before, during, and after the COVID-19 global pandemic. Picower (2021) stated that we cannot leave spaces where tools of Whiteness can hide (p.125). Intentional and carefully crafted approaches to developing teacher candidates' critical awareness of their teacher identity can be powerful in fostering teacher activist dispositions and teacher activist pedagogies (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Quan et al., 2019). Issues intersecting with power and race, class, gender, language, orientation, etc., are endemic to the education systems tasked with preparing teachers; to this end, passive attempts to disrupt oppression within teacher education will not suffice. How can we as teacher educators recruit and prepare educators to develop a teacher activist identity if we have not honestly examined and interrogated dispositions toward activism? Matusov and Pease-Alvarez (2020) urged educators to move past collaboration toward critical dialogue in action (p. A13). Internal

temperature checks for social and racial justice need to become routinized in faculty and department meetings. As I displayed in Figure 1, teacher activist dispositions develop out of critical interrogation of how one's identities, beliefs, and experiences are privileged and oppressed. I contend that teacher educators should look inward and critically examine their contributions to culturally sustaining pedagogies and creatively navigate institutional power struggles to hold our fellow teacher educators accountable when their lack of introspection and the absence of action stifle radical change.

Now, I would like to focus attention on how pre-service teachers are selected and prepared to teach for social justice. Attacks against public education have become overtly more political over the last twenty years. I argue that the teacher candidate pool must develop a deep political education about intersections of race, language, and power in education. This study provided evidence that teacher activists come to the profession with the inherent understanding that teaching is political, and they are entering the profession to be change agents. The development of these activist dispositions is crucial for future teacher candidates of EBLs. I assert that teacher education programs will need to revisit their disposition frameworks to ensure that their programs are looking for candidates who not only have a social justice stance but the foundations of a raciolinguistic stance and activist dispositions for emergent bilingual learners. These dispositions should be of great importance for all pre-service teachers because, as Kevin's portrait illustrated, many educators can be tasked with educating emergent bilingual youth despite their lack of preparation for teaching this population.

How might teacher education programs assess pre-service teachers' dispositions for racial and linguistic justice? I suggest that pre-service teachers are asked to think critically and make attempts to speak critically about their experiences, beliefs, and identities in relation to issues of

oppression and advantage (Picower, 2021) during their entrance interview to gain admission into a teacher education program. Many teacher education programs have already done extensive work in both assessing and developing pre-service teachers' dispositions toward social justice (See Breault, 2019; Matteson & Boyd, 2017; Picower, 2021; Taylor & Klein, 2015). With the understanding that pre-service teachers may enter teacher education programs with varying levels of experience and maturity in making meaning of their identities and beliefs, I recommend strategic check-in points prior to a pre-service teacher becoming a teacher candidate in a clinical internship. For example, many universities require students to meet with their advisors each semester to register for classes or discuss their academic progress in their program of study. Conversations and assessments of dispositions of teacher activism can become embedded in these meeting times. Additionally, I call for teacher educators to think strategically about what courses should serve as check-in points for how well a candidate is developing their teacher activist dispositions. Arguably, waiting to assess a teacher candidate's disposition to inform the candidate's readiness for the teaching profession is too late. Although not fiscally advantageous for colleges and universities, I support having critical conversations with pre-service teachers who are not showing growth in developing criticality around raciolinguistic issues to be counseled out of the teaching profession and provided with mentoring and support in finding a career that does not have a direct impact on youth (Picower, 2021). Albeit uncomfortable and less financially lucrative for teacher education programs, the alternative, certifying teacher candidates devoid of activist dispositions, prove to be far more damaging to the students and communities these teachers will encounter.

Reconceptualizing What Counts as Teacher Activism

I felt a tension in celebrating the work of these four teacher activists without acknowledging the risks that they take each day to do their work for and with young people and their communities. How can we support and protect these educators who are willing to fight to change the material needs of marginalized communities? The reality is that teacher activists should not act alone, yet many of them do. I discovered two seminal texts that kept me from resigning from my teaching position during my first year. Kohl's (1994) collection of essays "*I Won't Learn from You*" *And Other Thoughts on Creative Maladjustment* and Michie's (1999) personal account of his becoming a teacher *Holler if you Hear Me: The Education of a Teacher and His Students*, were the only resources I had that would provide mentorship for teacher activism and resistance. Both texts provided me, a young and inexperienced teacher, insights on how students and teachers alike exercise their agency to resist oppressive classroom spaces. The education community readily accepts that young people are often positioned as powerless, and teachers and administrators are positioned as powerful in anti-liberatory learning environments. Students are lauded, as they should be, because of their willingness to resist these forms of oppression. For example, Kinloch (2017) wrote "I use the phrase *performances of resistance* to refer to a mode of communication or a particular, directed way of responding to the negative gaze, the degrading treatment, and the hurtful assumptions many youth of color receive from others, peers and adults alike" [*Emphasis in original*] (p. 27). Yet teachers, in many school contexts, are also positioned as powerless and enact performances of resistance against oppressive power systems. The literature on teacher activism has captured the transformative work of educators actively engaged in social and political forms of collective activism in detail. After completing this study and reflecting on my own experiences as an educator of emergent bilingual youth, I wondered what aspects of teacher activism are not being studied if current

conceptions of teacher activism occur only within prescribed forms of collective activism. Like microaggressions experienced by people of Color, teacher activists encounter frequent and pervasive occurrences of oppression aimed at their students and themselves within their day-to-day work as educators. These small, yet powerful acts of resistance in response to oppressive microaggressions are often acted upon in the moment. Broadening the scope of teacher activism to include the day-to-day points of resistance teachers enact enables the education research community an opportunity to learn the nature of these micro-oppressive incidents and how educators traverse and resist these situations.

I am not arguing against current definitions of social teacher activism or political teacher activism, which call for a collectivist approach to activism; instead, I am calling for a broadened understanding of what teacher activism is and how teachers enact their activism. The work of Mills et al. provides two types of activism, affirmative and transformative, which can be evidenced by internally and externally focused practices. Studies like these present a wider view of activism that can help teacher educators better understand the small forms of activism teachers take on a day-to-day basis. Quan et al. (2019) concluded that “activism and criticality can take on many forms, meaning teachers and teacher educators possess considerable agency to mobilize change across a variety of micro and macro contexts” (p. 218). I think it is extremely important to honor Kevin’s and Mar-y-Sol’s critical awareness of their very presence as educators as being acts of resistance. I posit that BIPOC and LGBTQIA educators with a critical awareness of how their bodies, identities, and ideas disrupt traditional approaches to schooling perform acts of resistance by showing up every day for their students and their communities (Dumas & Nelson, 2016; Fox & Ore, 2010). Making space for these forms of activism to be included in the literature on teacher activism honors the unique and difficult terrain critically minded educators

navigate while also being tasked to educate and nurture youth. Without more nuanced understandings of teacher activism, the field of education will continue to have difficulty in sustaining these invaluable teacher activists in the classrooms where they are needed.

A part of growing my anticolonial researcher stance is owning the points of privilege I have as a researcher, writing about the work of teacher activists for emergent bilingual youth from a university space. Along with other teacher educators, education researchers, and policymakers, I can publish research and policy about what activism is and isn't, but many of us have left our classrooms because of our frustration and feelings of powerlessness in making a difference as classroom teachers. In some ways, the exodus of teacher educators to adult education has me wondering how sustainable the types of activism we call for in our research can be sustained by classroom teachers. I grapple with this question as a P-12 teacher for almost twenty years who is now making a transition to teacher education. Michie (2005) reminded education stakeholders that although small groups of educators committed to social justice can and do enact change, this is not enough. He affirmed:

But if we really want what many of us say we want--equal educational opportunity for all children, along with fair and just outcomes—then we must recognize that the challenges we face shouldn't rest on the shoulders of caring and committed teachers but on all our shoulders—teachers, parents, citizens, everybody. None of us should be let off the hook.
(p. 188)

As teacher educators and educational researchers, we must remain honest with ourselves and our teachers about our journeys and challenges in sustaining our activism work when we were in the classroom; we must also continue to ground ourselves in the realities of what it means to teach

today and work to capture this earnestly in the pages of our research articles and the lecture notes of our university classrooms.

Anticolonial Research Methodology and Implications for Research with Teachers

Patel (2016) asserted that “Research is fundamentally relational, cultural, and political practice” (p. 62). To this end, education researchers should collaborate with and be ready to answer to the educators, students, families, and communities within which they research. In this study, the use of an anticolonial research methodology served as a reminder that the benefits of this study should be “of service” (Patel, 2016, p. 64) to the educators who collaborated with me on this research project. It was my intent to share in the ownership and the authority of the knowledge production because the impact of this work can shape education policy and the lives of students and teachers. I found that the emphasis on the relational considerations of research with educators provided opportunities for myself and the teacher activists to share in the power of teachers and students and critically reflect on what this means for the future of teacher activism in classrooms, communities, and research spaces. I hope that more educational research is conducted with the intent to learn with educators, students, and communities as opposed to looking for what can be taken from these exchanges with these populations. Educational research approaches valuing the relational nature of education research work to dismantle the coloniality of knowledge production and expertise. As an education researcher, the tensions between positioning myself as an “expert” and sharing in the expertise of those who contribute to who I am and what I produce as an “expert” will always be at odds. Taking on an anti-colonial approach to research affords educational researchers the tools to take “pause” (Patel, 2016, p. 1) and take stock of our intentions and impact on the material and contextual outcomes of our

research. Arguably, this is a necessary first step to unseat the role of coloniality in education research.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study was the lack of analysis of each activist's school culture and organization. Based on the data collected from Mar-y-Sol and Jessie, it appears that their school environment may have presented some level of support in helping them sustain themselves as teacher activists. Further studies on school climate and the retention of teacher activists of emergent bilingual youth are needed.

Additionally, more research is needed to delve deeper into the role of activist dispositions in developing a teacher activist identity. The importance of the development of teacher activist dispositions for emergent bilingual youth was an unanticipated finding for this study. Further research on the composition of teacher activists' dispositions for emergent bilingual youth and possible indicators of these dispositions would aid teacher educators in recruiting and preparing future teachers who are more likely to show readiness for teaching racialized emergent bilingual learners.

To conclude this dissertation, I leave us, human beings committed to a more just world, with the charge to continue the fight for liberatory spaces of education for emergent bilingual learners—for all learners—because our students are resilient and will always emerge as “roses out of concrete.”

Did you hear about the rose that grew
from a crack in the concrete?
Proving nature's laws wrong it
learned to walk without having feet.

Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams,

it learned to breathe fresh air.

Long live the rose that grew from concrete

when no one else ever cared.

(Tupac Shakur, 1999)

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Appendix 1.1: Initial Interview Protocol

Demographic Information

- How would you identify yourself?
 - How would you identify racially and/or ethnically?
 - How would you identify your gender?
 - How would you describe your sexual orientation?
 - How would you position your social class growing up?
 - How would you position your social class now?
 - How old are you presently?
 - What languages do you speak? Would you consider your proficiency in any of them?

Educational and Professional Background

- How would your educational background differ from childhood to now?
- How and why did you become a teacher?
- How many years have you taught?
- What grades and subjects have you taught?
- How long have you been teaching emergent bilingual learners?
- How did you become an educator of emergent bilingual learners? Was it a conscious choice?
- How would you describe your school setting and your classroom setting?
- How would you describe the larger community your school is in?

Commitment I-Reconciling the Vision

- What are some of the injustices you see as obstacles for you and your students?

- How have these injustices/inequalities shaped who you are as a teacher?
- How have these injustices impacted the work that you do?
- How would you define social justice and how it relates to you as an educator?
- If a socially just world could be realized, what would it look like for you, your students, and the world around you?

Commitment II-Moving Toward Liberation

- How would you define teacher activism?
- Do you consider yourself a teacher activist? Why or why not?
 - How would you describe your activist work?
 - Where does your activism take place?
 - What are some of the benefits of your activism?
 - What are some of the challenges you face as a teacher activist?
 - What is the relationship between the activist work that you do outside of your classroom and your work inside of the classroom?
- How do you decide what resources, texts, activities, events to include in your work with your students?
- Do you engage your students in activist work? Why or why not?
 - How do you engage your students in activist work?
 - What concepts and/or skills do you think teachers need to develop student activists?
 - What concepts and/or skills do you think students need to become student activists?

Commitment III-Standing Up to Oppression

- When would you say your first encounter with activism/teacher activism was?
- How did that encounter shape who you are now as a teacher activist?
- Many educators see injustices but do not act. Why do you think you choose to participate in activism?
- What sustains you as a teacher activist?