“STRUGGLING TO FIND OUR WAY:” RURAL EDUCATORS’ EXPERIENCES WORKING WITH AND CARING FOR LATINX IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

by

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Dedicated to the students of Ririe Elementary School.

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ABSTRACT

Rural communities across the United States are experiencing a rapid increase in the number of immigrant students. While the number of culturally and linguistically diverse students continues to grow within midwestern states, the demographics of teachers remain white, female, and monolingual. Often teachers have little to no training working with students and their families whose backgrounds differ from their own. Thus, there is a greater urgency for teachers to develop culturally competent teaching practices that address the needs of all students. The purpose of this year-long, school-based narrative inquiry was to examine the beliefs, attitudes, and practices of rural educators as they described their work with Latinx immigrant, elementary students, negotiated the "space" between a professional and personal identity and demonstrated an ethic of care. This inquiry is arranged into "livings, tellings, retellings, and relivings" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 70) and serves to shed light on the entwined lived experiences of myself, my participants, and the community in which we reside. Swanson's Middle Range Theory of Care (1991, 1993) served as the conceptual framework that illuminated how my participants discussed working with and caring for their Latinx immigrant students. Findings from this study support teacher education by providing practical recommendations for promoting culturally responsive practices, grounded in care, for preservice (PST) and in-service teachers.

CHAPTER ONE. LIFE IN SECOND GRADE CONSISTED OF A DAILY REMINDER THAT I DIDN'T BELONG

Sister Shirley[1]

Sister Shirley was devoted to God and her wooden ruler—I feared both. In the fall of 1987, my parents withdrew me from the local public school and enrolled me at St. John Baptist de La Salle Elementary School. I found their decision to be quite confusing but even from an early age, I knew better than to question my parents. My mother, a public-school teacher, had been raised in the Catholic faith but embraced agnosticism sometime during her college years. She openly despised organized religion, thus leaving all spiritual decisions to my father. Born in Morocco during the French occupation, my father, a practicing Muslim, attended Moroccan primary schools where my grandfather worked as a teacher. Eventually, my grandfather saved enough money to send all seven of his children to French Catholic schools in post-colonial Morocco. For both my grandfather and father, Catholic schools provided safety, quality education, and strict discipline. To prepare me for second grade, the day before school began, my father sat me down at our kitchen table, where I received instruction on curriculum and expected behavior. Religious classes, including Mass, were to be thought of as history classes. "Jesus was a prophet, like Mohammad," my father would say. I was to obey my teacher, the principal, and the priest at all times. He reminded me of this by saying, "A teacher is like Allah. Never question your teacher." The next day, my father walked me to the classroom door, where a nun dressed in black stood greeting students and parents. I was standing nervously behind my father, but he shoved me forward and instructed me to extend my arm. As I shook Sister Shirley's

[1] The narrative, *Sister Shirley*, was previously published in the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. A complete citation may be found under References.

hand, I remember staring at her side rosary and the cincture that fastened around her waist. Even at the age of 7, I knew the power that Sister Shirley wielded.

My transition into second grade was a struggle from the start. I was the only Muslim in the entire K–8 building, and none of the adults could pronounce my last name. My dark curly hair, tan skin, and "large" nose clashed with the physical appearances of my classmates and invited unwanted attention in the form of bullying. One way of countering this was by attempting to make my classmates laugh. Despite being a naturally shy child, I desperately wanted to make friends, and throughout the day, I would tell jokes and funny stories in the hope that someone would accept me. Sister Shirley did not approve. Her abuse began subtly. Each day, the second graders had two recess periods. As punishment for talking, my recess time was spent inside with Sister Shirley copying lines out of a large King James Bible. She particularly enjoyed the Book of Psalms. Often, I was forced to copy verses onto lined paper until my right hand mimicked that of an eagle's claw. Despite the physical pain, the isolation from my peers was even more excruciating. As fall turned to winter, my confinement continued, and the physical abuse escalated. During classroom instruction, Sister Shirley was notorious for carrying a wooden ruler, an extension of her hand, as she glided around the room. The majority of my classmates had enough sense to keep quiet, but often, I would turn and talk to my friends. This was when the ruler came out. Woosh! Smack! I would feel the air before the sting landed. The redness of my left knuckles would last for hours, a physical reminder not to test God. Life in second grade consisted of a daily reminder that I didn't belong.

During the spring semester of second grade, my classmates were preparing for their First Communion. For them, this meant intense memorization of prayers, countless definitions, and procedures for receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist. Sister Shirley

insisted that I attend Mass; reciting prayers in repetition and kneeling quietly as my classmates attended mock "confessions" with Father Hank. As second grade came to a close, I was hopeful that third grade with Mrs. Bern, a lay[2] Catholic teacher, would offer me some reprieve from the physical and emotional abuse I had endured under Sister Shirley. Little did I know, Mrs. Bern was concerned with my soul and my status as an "outsider" intensified.

Every Wednesday, I was instructed by Mrs. Bern to accept a blessing from the priest, while my classmates received the Holy Eucharist. Each week, with my arms crossed against my chest, I would stand before Father Hank, who would lay hands on my forehead and ask God to forgive me. As I made my way back to the pew, several boys would heckle in low whispers. They called me "camel jockey" and "Jew." Kneeling once again, facing the large statue of Christ hanging on the cross, I would desperately pray to Allah as the tears streamed down my face. "Please make me normal. Please help them understand that Allah is God. Please help!" For a year, I obediently followed Mrs. Bern's instructions because I truly believed that I was different from my classmates, that I was a sinner.

As the lone non-Christian at St. John Baptist de La Salle Elementary School, I was navigating two worlds; my home life was quite disconnected from my school life. I was the only kid I knew whose grandmother would visit for an entire year, whose family ate khobz at every meal, and whose father dug a pit in the backyard to roast a lamb for Eid al-Fitr. Most of the time, I kept my home life private. However, in a desperate attempt to merge both worlds, I once tried to explain my grandmother's recent pilgrimage to Mecca to my friends. What a disaster! They laughed at me for days.

[2] Laity are the members of the church who do not belong to the clergy or religious orders.

At the beginning of fourth grade, my teacher, Mrs. Harris, began testing the boundaries of the "deal" that my parents had made with the school. The terms of attending St. John Baptist de La Salle Elementary School included my attendance at weekly school Mass, actively participating in the Liturgy of the Word,[3] and, for my parents, a higher tuition rate. Although Mrs. Harris knew that I was a Muslim, she insisted that I participate in confession during Lent. Earlier in the week, she had announced the day and time that the fourth-grade students were to attend confession. Several times I reminded Mrs. Harris that I was not Catholic and that I had never participated in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. My pleas were ignored. During Holy Week, my classmates and I filed into the church, waiting for Father Hank to arrive. One by one, my classmates entered the wooden confessional and professed their sins. I remember being anxious as I desperately thought of something to confess. When it was my turn, I opened the large wooden door, walked in, and knelt in front of the confessional screen. The room was dark and intimidating. Waiting patiently for Father Hank to complete the Sign of the Cross, I politely told him that I was not supposed to be in the confessional. Reminding me that I was a sinner and that God would want me to confess, he walked me through the process and sent me away. For my sins, I was instructed to recite 10 Hail Marys. I never told my parents, but for the next 5 years, I received the Sacrament of Reconciliation without objection.

Into the Midst of Stories

This is not a traditional dissertation. The preceding narrative is just one of many, woven throughout, illuminating the complex experiences of "people living storied lives on storied landscapes" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 145). My experiences at St. John Baptist de La

[3] Readings from Scripture.

Salle Elementary School (all names of people and places are pseudonyms) are examples of *reliving* stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) and showcase "the restorying quality of narrative" (p. 9). This beginning narrative serves as an autobiographical touchstone, guiding me as I make meaning of the experiences of my participants, stories lived, and stories told.

Each narrative is deeply personal and highlights the complicated nature of human relationships. Throughout this inquiry, a "multiplicity of voices" are presented that span the entangled dimensions of "time, place, the personal, and the social" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 63). As the reader, you will encounter "trying to make sense of life as lived" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 78) as narratives turn inward, listening to participants and observing their actions in the classroom, as well as turn outward, reflecting on my positionality within the school community and grappling with emerging tensions. This "back and forthing" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 138) is intricate, layered, intimate, and often messy. It is storied.

Throughout this inquiry, you will encounter people living their stories and telling their stories–simultaneously (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). As you embark on this storied journey, the complexity of narrative will reveal itself. This dissertation is not organized in the "traditional" sense (i.e., methodology, methods, findings, analysis), but rather, staying true to narrative form, this inquiry is arranged into "livings, tellings, retellings, and relivings" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 70) and serves to shed light on the entwined lived experiences of myself, my participants, and the community in which we reside. As stories continuously unfold, be mindful that narratives are unfinished (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), organic, and fluid. As you move with me, "walking in the midst of stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 63), I invite you to *lean in* as we make meaning of rural educators' beliefs, attitudes, and

practices, grounded in their experiences working with diverse student populations. It is important to note that these experiences are unique to me and represent one specific rural community.

This dissertation is a qualitative narrative inquiry that seeks to make meaning of the experiences of rural educators who work with Latinx immigrant students. In this chapter, I begin by *reliving* my past experiences as a Muslim child who attended a Catholic elementary school. I then discuss my narrative beginnings, shedding light on my multiple identities as a former 6th–12th grade teacher, current teacher educator, and emerging qualitative researcher. The story titled *Anne* provides you, the reader, with brief glimpses into how I came to know, live, and conduct research in a small midwestern rural community. I then share demographic data (i.e., population, poverty rate, median household income) on the town of Ririe, Indiana, which is located in Shelton County.

Narrative Beginnings

A researcher's own lived experiences are central to a narrative inquiry. My experiences as a daughter of an immigrant, a former teacher of immigrant students, a current teacher educator, and a resident of a rural midwestern community both inform and guide my understanding as an emerging narrative inquirer. As I reflect on my storied past, it is impossible to separate the personal from the professional self, and my experiences as both a student and as a teacher strongly influenced my decision to become a classroom-based researcher.

I became interested in school-based research because of the challenges I have faced as both a student and a teacher. As a student, I rarely enjoyed school and found it challenging to connect with teachers. The majority of my school experiences were an endless negotiation of self; a fluid, back and forth of "cultural displacement and social discrimination" (Bhabha, 2012,

p. 8) due to feelings of being "othered." From an early age, through interactions with teachers and classmates, "I became hyper-aware that the languages, religious practices, and cultural beliefs that my family held were not welcome within the school walls" (Oudghiri, 2021). My home life contrasted greatly from my school life, and a definite tension developed. I came to detest my curly hair, my Arab nose, the food we ate–anything that made me different from my classmates.

During my 10 years as a 6^{th}–12^{th} grade language arts and social studies teacher in Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Idaho, I have had a wide variety of teaching experiences within multiple school settings: parochial, charter, alternative, and public. Working in both urban and rural settings, I have served demographically diverse populations, economically disadvantaged students, and students with special needs. While teaching at an alternative high school in Idaho, I had the privilege of learning from and with several students who identified as immigrant and undocumented. Additionally, this was the first time in my career that I began to connect with students outside of the classroom. Often, I would engage in conversations with my students around immigration and schooling experiences of alienation and othering due to differences in culture and language. I found that in sharing those experiences, my students were able to see my vulnerability, and a bridge of trust developed. Through open dialogue, we were able to connect on a more authentic level, and, in some small way, those shared stories constituted a caring pedagogical approach to teaching. Based on those teaching experiences, I became interested in how educators define and engage in an ethic of care.

As a teacher, I focused on building strong student-teacher relationships, yet struggled with feelings of isolation. Test-driven school reforms and the frustration of working within a

structure that systematically drove marginalized students out of schools ultimately led to my exit from the classroom. I lacked the resources and confidence to challenge the status quo (e.g., tracking, racial discrimination and inequity). However, these feelings of frustration and helplessness fueled my interest in educational research, and, as I transitioned from the PK–12 environment into higher education, I was consumed by a single question: How do educators support students whose cultural, linguistic, religious, sociopolitical, and economic backgrounds differ from their own?

Currently, I find myself in a unique position as an emerging researcher and teacher educator. Much of what I have learned through coursework and research projects I have shared with my undergraduate students, including my research interest on immigrant and undocumented students. Over the past 4 years, my undergraduate students have been fortunate to learn about the ever-changing immigration policies in the United States from a presentation by an incredible colleague and friend. Formerly an undocumented student, Hermila now works with students, families, and fellow community members, many of whom are immigrants or undocumented themselves. Hermila's presentation on immigration has opened the floodgates for meaningful conversations with my students, many of whom had bought into the lies that immigrants were "illegal" and "criminals" who did not pay taxes, stole American jobs, and trafficked drugs across the U.S./Mexican border. As a teacher educator, I have sought out ways of challenging the ignorance, bigotry, and outright hatred of the Trump- era, which has fueled these disgusting lies about undocumented immigrants (Osei-Tutu et al., 2021). I hope that by focusing research on rural educators' experiences of working with immigrant students, I can add to the literature on preparing preservice teachers (PSTs) for diverse classrooms by focusing on a pedagogy of care that is active and purposeful.

"Off to supper for another chat"
(*Researcher Journal, October 9, 2018*)

Anne

When I relocated to a rural midwestern town in the fall of 2018, I did not know the difference between a seed tender and a grain auger. To my reader, this might not seem like the necessary knowledge needed to live in a rural community, but I had fallen in love with a farmer and I needed to acclimate myself to this new life. I was initially surprised by my surroundings. I imagined country living to be quiet, but I quickly learned that during October and November the gravel roads became overrun with large red and green combines heading toward the fields to harvest beans and corn. A myriad of semitrucks dotted the landscape, waiting to haul grain to the local elevators. I knew that farming was demanding work, but I had no idea that women and men worked tirelessly, both day and night, to harvest the fruits of their labor, and in the evenings, I was often home by myself. To combat the loneliness, I made the 3-mile drive to my boyfriend's (now husband's) childhood farm and would eat "supper" with his mother. It was through these organic, kitchen-table conversations of "everyday talk" (Kohl & McCutcheon, 2015, p. 747) that a great friendship blossomed.

For nearly 50 years, Anne has been an active community member. In addition to her life on the farm, she served as the librarian for Ririe Elementary School for 35 years. To this day, she still refers to her former students as "my kids," and she continues to volunteer at the school. Over several months, Anne and I exchanged stories late into the evening hours. Sitting around a round wooden table under dim light, Anne asked questions about my family's background, my past teaching experiences, and my educational research. In exchange, I became knowledgeable about her family and life on a farm. In a way, Anne vetted my entry into the community that she loved so much. Anne's intimate knowledge of the community, as well as her relationship with the

students, staff, and families of Ririe Elementary School, initially provided me with access to the school. However, on further examination, it was so much more than that. Anne identifies as white, female, and monolingual, yet she has a close connection to the Hispanic population through her work at the school. As my conversations with Anne continued, she strongly suggested that I contact the principal of Ririe Elementary School and introduce myself. Initially, this idea weighed heavily on my mind because, although I resided in the county, I was an outsider. I had never lived in such a small community before and I felt out of place. Anytime I was introduced to a resident of the county, whether it was at the local grocery store or the annual tractor pull, the first question asked was, "What is your family's name?" closely followed by, "Where did you grow up?" In this community, most people were related by blood or by marriage. Residents were also curious about my physical appearance. My dark hair, tan skin, and the Arabic tattoo prominently displayed on my forearm sparked several conversations. In addition to my insecurities, I also felt a tremendous amount of responsibility in conducting "backyard research" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1991). On a personal level, Anne's family was well known and respected in the community. I wondered how my research would affect my relationships with my boyfriend and his family. Additionally, I questioned my ability to cultivate a relationship with participants. Would I be able to make meaning of a people and community that I knew very little about? Despite my anxiety, I cared deeply about teaching and I hoped that in some small way my work would potentially contribute to supporting teachers, students, and families within the community. As I continued to grapple with my feelings, I made plans to contact the principal of Ririe Elementary School.

Ririe, Indiana

The small town of Ririe, Indiana has no traffic lights. Nestled within corn and bean fields, this sleepy town of 800 residents has three local restaurants—two of which are owned by Hispanic families—a bank, a gas station, and a library. With no local grocery store in town, Ririe's residents must drive to the neighboring town, roughly 15 miles away, for food and toiletries. You can, however, pick up a gallon of milk and some snacks at Miller's gas station at an inflated price. According to Data USA (2021), the household median income for a family in Ririe is approximately $40,000, and nearly 30% of the population lives below the poverty line. As in many rural Indiana towns, a row of deserted storefronts lines the downtown area. Before visiting the school, I would walk up and down the crumbling cement sidewalks, peering into the large, grimy store windows. Inside the abandoned buildings, it was as if time had stood still—faded newspapers, rusty bicycles, and velvet couches from the 1970s were all but forgotten. Many of the buildings were structurally unsound. The two-story brick building that sat next to the library began leaning after heavy rains, and large bricks began popping off the frame and onto the sidewalk and street. As a way of protecting the community, the local sheriff placed yellow police tape around the building.

Due to a lack of industry (e.g., manufacturing, retail) within the town of Ririe, many residents commute nearly 60 miles each day to work in neighboring communities. I was surprised to learn that within the county, most of the farm ground was either owned by corporate farms or by multigenerational families struggling to compete. In my conversations with business owners, I discovered that the local dairy and hog farms employed much of the Hispanic population, mostly undocumented workers, that lived in Ririe.

Shelton County, Indiana

Ririe, Indiana resides within Shelton County. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019a), the population of Shelton County is approximately 9,000 residents. The historical population of Shelton County mirrors that of many rural communities within Indiana. While the county saw its most significant population increase during the late 1800s due to white settlers' involvement in crop and livestock production, the population has slowly declined over the past 100 hundred years with a loss of nearly 10% during the economic downturn of the 1980s. According to the Pew Research Center (2020), the population of rural communities has been shrinking since the year 2000, with approximately 14% of the U.S. population residing in non-urban areas. With that said, Mathema et al. (2018) reported on a recent study conducted by the Center for American Progress which found that immigrant communities have reversed or mitigated declining rural populations due to the economic opportunities they bring (e.g., in the farming and meat-processing industries). The most recent U.S. Census data shows that in Shelton County, 90% of the residents identify as white. Residents of Hispanic or Latino origin make up approximately 5% of the population (U.S. Census, 2019). In terms of educational levels, 90% of the population in Shelton County graduated from high school, and 15% hold a bachelor's degree or higher. While the median household income is $45,000, 15% of county residents live in poverty.

Bright Lights, Small Town

My transition from "city girl" to life in the country was relatively smooth, thanks to Anne. For more than a year, I attended local events at the library, festivals, county fairs, graduation parties, weddings, tractor shows, and a fascinating presentation on seed technology in agriculture. Naturally, people were curious about who I was and my work, but I was surprised

by the candor of the folks I met. People were willing to speak with me about the current state of education in the county, and again, I attribute this to Anne. Before stepping into the school, I was able to speak with local business owners, members of the school board, county council members, students, families, and teachers. I found it interesting that at each event I attended, conversations about the local school would naturally come up. Although I would always be considered an "outsider," slowly, over time, the community welcomed me as a neighbor.

With each kitchen-table conversation, I reflected on my positionality as an emerging researcher and new member to the community. Later, these kitchen-table conversations would serve as a way of making meaning of the fluidity of my identities in relation to my participants' experiences (Kohl & McCutcheon, 2015). In the evenings after I left Anne's farm, I would drive the 3 miles to my house waiting for Shawn to return from the fields. Often restless, I would throw on a pair of tennis shoes and take our dog, Charlie, for a walk. Leash in hand, Charlie and I would venture down the driveway making a sharp left at the mailbox, and head north, down the gravel road. There was no point in carrying a cell phone because the reception was spotty, at best. With only my 7-pound Yorkie for "protection," I would set off into the darkness, immersing myself in my environment, allowing each one of my senses to come to the forefront of my mind. Wearing shorts and a light sweatshirt, I was comfortable with the cool air brushing against my face. Off in the distance, I could hear the "whirring" of combines, gliding back and forth across the field. Then, as the combine slowed, what at first sounded like someone pouring dog food or coffee beans into a glass jar, would overtake my ears—the combine was filling semi-trucks with corn. As Charlie and I continued on our walk, the seemingly flat road gave way to a slight incline, and just above the tops of the corn, less than 5 miles away from our house, were the bright, white lights of the dairy. Sometimes Charlie would stop and sniff the overgrown grasses,

but on some nights, he was focused, his little body cutting through the darkness like an otter swimming in a river. In the constant movement, my mind would begin to wonder, my thoughts swirling around all of the community members (the teachers, families, children). As we walked, I wondered about their entangled lives and their perspectives. Each of them a character in this story and their experiences puzzle pieces for me to try to fit together, to try and make sense of it all. As I allowed my mind to fill with wonders, I became annoyed that I didn't have a pen and pad of paper readily available. Suddenly, Charlie's "about-face" and seated position notified me that he was ready to go home. As I scooped him up into my arms, I turned back toward home. It seemed darker with only a sprinkling of machinery lights to guide my way home. As I increased my pace, I began talking to Charlie. Being a dog, he didn't reply, he did companionably lick my arm a few times. As we neared the house, the thought that kept crossing my mind was, what do I know about rural America? Because I am a native Hoosier, the first thought that popped into my mind was a song by John Cougar Mellencamp[4],and, thankfully, with only my dog to hear me, I began to sing…

Well, I was born in a small town
And I live in a small town
Prob'ly die in a small town
Oh, those small communities
All my friends are so small town
My parents live in the same small town
My job is so small town
Provides little opportunity

Nearing the mailbox, I set Charlie down, and he bolted for the front door. As I continued to reflect, I realized that in fact, what I did know about this rural community was grounded firmly in a white perspective and I was doubtful that "Small Town" represented the experiences of the

[4] "Small Town" by John Mellencamp was released on the 1985 Scarecrow album. A complete citation may be found under References.

immigrant children, families, and participants that would become an integral part of my study. Throwing my tennis shoes by the front door, I reminded myself that as the instrument of this narrative inquiry, I needed to open myself up to the complexities of each experience. Eventually, Charlie and I added a morning walk to our routine, and, for nearly 2 years, he became my constant companion as I walked "in the midst" of this narrative inquiry. Our walks became my process for thinking deeply about the "livings and tellings" and making meaning of the "relivings and retellings" of my lived experiences.

Brief Illuminations of Upcoming Chapters

In Chapter Two, I begin with a synopsis of rural education in the United States. Focusing specifically on immigrant student populations, I then provide demographic data on Latinx immigrant student populations in rural Indiana schools. To offer a professional touchstone, I share my experiences as a rural educator in Idaho, working with undocumented Latinx students. From there, I include a narrative that explains my entry into the school communities and initial experiences with participants. I end the chapter by grounding my narrative inquiry in a particular wonder.

In Chapter Three, I discuss how the "livings, tellings, relivings, and retellings" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 71) guided my conceptualization of narrative inquiry. I also include a brief overview of narrative inquiry within educational-based research, followed by four separate, in-depth portraits of my participants, in the form of *tellings and retellings.*

Chapter Four introduces the theoretical consideration used to guide this inquiry, as well as the methods used during this classroom-based narrative inquiry. I then provide an explanation of the practical, field-text considerations and a collection of classroom narratives is provided in the form of *retellings.*

In Chapter Five, I discuss the considerations of analysis and interpretation. Using Swanson's Middle Range Theory of Care (1991, 1993), I provide "interpretative accounts" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) that illuminate how my participants discussed working with and caring for their immigrant students.

Grounded in reflexivity, Chapters Six and Seven focus on the "relivings and retellings" by addressing emerging tensions. As a way of expanding on kitchen-table conversations, Chapter Six features an imaginative conversation with participants and scholars in the field in the form of a play. Finally, as a way of situating this inquiry within future spaces, Chapter Seven addresses PSTs' questions using a podcast format. Chapter Seven provides practical applications for PSTs around culturally responsive teaching practices and future pedagogical practices grounded in care. Finally, in Chapter Eight, I provide an update on the school community.

CHAPTER TWO. THEY DON'T KNOW. THEY DON'T KNOW WHERE WE'VE BEEN AND HOW WE GOT HERE.

One Reflection of a Community[5]

I grew up here, I went to school here.
It gives me a different view on things, than people coming in from the outside.
We've always been close, we're so small.
I love Ririe, I like the small school.

We've got more new families coming in. It's harder.
We try, having to make more of an effort.
New people.
We've got a pipeline of relatives coming in.
It's going to be a growing issue for us.

I think it's changing.
You knew everybody in town – now,
if somebody walks by your house, you don't know who they are, or
if they should be there.
It's changed, the feel of the town.
Not that they're not good people –
it's just not the type of community that we're used to.

My experiences as a teacher are unique within the field of education. As a 6th–12th grade social studies and language arts educator, I have taught in three different states, for five different rural and urban school districts, and in multiple settings (i.e., parochial, charter, alternative, and public). When I sat down to crunch the numbers, I estimate that I taught nearly 1,000 students in 10 years. According to a March 2019 report issued by the U.S. Department of Education on teacher mobility, retention, and attrition, Meyer et al. (2019) found that only 8% of teachers, or "movers," transferred from their initial teaching position to another school. Over the years, my move from school to school was out of necessity and not desire, yet when I reflect on the

[5] The following poem was created from transcript data with Linda Welch.

experiences I gained, working with a wide range of students, families, and colleagues from varying social, ethnic, racial, and economic backgrounds, I realize my learning expanded with each new experience. I became more open and aware of biases and sought out ways of creating a more inclusive classroom environment for my students. As I transitioned from a 6th–12th grade teacher to a teacher educator and emerging researcher, I became interested in how teachers cultivated and maintained relationships with students.

Developing an ethic of care for students came to the forefront of my mind once I moved to Ririe, Indiana. In Chapter One, I shared my experiences as a Muslim child navigating life in a Catholic school. Throughout my Catholic education, I did not feel cared for, and thus, when I became a teacher, I found myself gravitating toward students who often felt marginalized. As a teacher, caring for a student meant supporting their emotional and academic needs.

The story of a school is nested within the story of a community. Additionally, in Chapter One, I shared my experiences of moving to a rural community. As I came to know the various characters in my new community, I began to wonder about the racial divisions that made up this small farming community. No matter who I spoke with or what event I attended, the topic of "illegals" somehow came up. Curious about this "us vs. them" mentality, I wondered if the local elementary school was experiencing the same phenomenon. Essentially, as an "outsider" myself, I wanted to know more about the other "outsiders" who lived and worked in the community. Specifically, I wanted to know how the teachers of Ririe Elementary School worked with and cared for Latinx immigrant students.

My past experiences working in rural schools, teaching both documented and undocumented Latinx students, serve as the inspiration for this narrative inquiry. To help situate the reader on the current state of rural education in the United States, in this chapter I begin by

providing a brief overview of how rural schools are defined and the issues that rural school districts face. I then discuss the intersection of rural schools and immigrant students—nationally, statewide, and at the local level. I then share my experiences as a teacher in rural Idaho, working with undocumented students and trying to support them the best way that I knew at the time. Finally, I end this chapter by introducing Ririe Elementary School, the site of this school-based narrative inquiry.

Rural Education in the United States

Approximately one in five students in the United States attends a rural school (Showalter et al., 2019). The National Center for Education Statistics (2006) defines rural locations in the following way:

Table 1. *NCES's Locale Categories for Rural Locations*

Locale	**Definition**
Fringe	Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster
Distant	Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster
Remote	Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster

While these definitions of rural regions in the United States are widely accepted among educational researchers, Cicchinelli and Beesley (2017) argued that:

> Factors such as internet connectivity, access to technology, the condition of facilities, the composition of the student population, and stability of the local population may be more closely tied to the quality and effectiveness of rural education systems than overall geographic or population characteristics reflective of place. (p. 2)

The current state of rural school districts varies from state to state, and in, many cases, from county to county. Within educational research, rural school districts have historically been overlooked compared with their urban counterparts. Some scholars argue that this is due to the smaller percentage of students that attend rural public schools compared with the overall student population. A 2018–2019 report by The Rural School and Community Trust found that approximately 25% of rural students reside in states in which their enrollment constitutes less than 15% of the total enrollment, and the median enrollment for rural school districts is roughly 500 students (Showalter, 2018).

Although rural education has been researched for more than 100 years, Jonathan Sher's (2019) edited book, *Education in Rural America: A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom,* is credited with bringing rural education to the attention of both policymakers and researchers in the late 1970s. In their review of the literature from 1991 to 2010, Arnold et al. (2005) examined journal articles that specifically addressed "rural specific" issues. Also, they evaluated the quality of the articles published. In their findings, the authors learned that the majority of research focused on the needs of students who received special education services. Similarly, when reviewing rural educational research between 2005 and 2010, Cicchinelli and Barley (2010) found that the top rural education issues shifted from a focus on "students with special needs, school safety, and instruction" (p. 5) toward student achievement and teacher preparedness.

Of the nearly 9 million students who attend rural schools, "one in six of those rural students' lives below the poverty line, one in seven qualifies for special education, and one in nine has changed residence in the previous 12 months" (Showalter et al., 2019). While the literature on rural education continues to focus on poverty levels (Sher, 2019; Tickamyer et al., 2017) and career and college readiness (Kryst et al., 2018; Mokher et al., 2019) and addresses the

needs of students who receive special education services (Berry & Gravelle, 2013), the literature on how rural school districts support immigrant populations is still emerging, with the majority of research conducted on border states (Peterson et al., 2020) and Western regions of the United States (Lin et al., 2014; Shim, 2013). Research on immigrant and undocumented students within rural education is limited.

Immigrant Students

The demographics of classrooms within the United States are changing, with a reported one in four children under the age of 6 growing up in immigrant households (Woods et al., 2016). The U.S. Department of Education's (2016) report, *The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce,* includes data from the NCES, which predicts that between 2012 and 2024, the number of white students will decrease from 51% to 46%, while the number of Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander students will increase. According to the Urban Institute (2019), nearly 55% of children of immigrants are bilingual, compared with almost 5% of children born to U.S. parents. The U.S. Census Bureau (2019) estimates that 24% of Hispanic children of foreign-born parents, including undocumented students, will enter U.S. classrooms, yet teaching professionals, including PSTs, will continue to remain white, female, and monolingual. Findings from the U.S. Department of Education (2016) report that U.S. schools are overwhelmingly homogeneous, with an estimated 82% of elementary and secondary teachers identifying as white. Nearly 5% of Indiana's population resides with at least one immigrant parent, and 32% of undocumented immigrants comprise the total immigrant population (American Immigration Council, 2017). As U.S. classrooms continue to become more diverse, there is a greater urgency for teachers to develop culturally competent teaching practices that address the needs of all students.

While urban areas within the Southwest and Northeast regions of the United States identify as "longtime immigrant destinations" (Rueda & Sillman, 2012), Southern states are only recently experiencing rapid growth. In the Midwest's primarily rural areas, the rapidly changing trends for immigrant students are still emerging. A study by Dondero and Muller (2012) found that Latinos preferred rural destinations to "traditional or established" urban areas, even though rural areas offer fewer opportunities for linguistic support, experience higher teacher turnover, and, overall, lack resources when compared with urban school districts. According to Cowdery (2010):

> The Midwest, as a whole, is seeing more immigrant growth because more immigrants are bringing families to the United States and perceive that rural communities can provide living wages and low living costs. In addition, safety concerns for children are less in small towns. (p. 4)

For many students, including immigrant and undocumented students, teachers are the first adults with whom students begin to form relationships outside of the home (Wong et al., 2018). Teachers who become part of their students' community and work to "instill pride" (Ladson-Billings, 2007) are more likely to become successful in developing student wholeness. Wholeness focuses on transformational and holistic student-teacher relationships in which learning and teaching practices are grounded in "compassion, integrity, and mindful awareness" (Byrnes, 2012, p. 22). By embracing all aspects of students' lives, thus valuing their humanity, teachers create a more inclusive environment with students and their families. According to Gay (2018), "teaching is most effective when ecological factors, such as prior experiences, community settings, cultural backgrounds, and ethnic identities of teachers and students are included in its implementation" (p. 28). While research on immigrant students' experiences in PK–12 settings continues to develop (Souto-Manning, 2007; Suárez-Orozco, 2017) along with

research on how the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) legislation impacts undocumented students within higher education (Lara & Nava, 2018; Nguyen & Serna, 2014), little research focuses on how teachers negotiate/navigate their cultural borderlands, specifically with regard to white, female, monolingual teachers working with diverse student populations.

Rural Schools in Indiana

The state of Indiana ranks among the 10 ten states with the largest population of students enrolled in rural school districts (Showalter et al., 2019). Of the nearly 1.1 million students enrolled in Indiana schools during the 2019–2020 academic year, approximately 250,000 students attended rural schools (IN DOE: Compass, 2020). Per pupil, Indiana spends roughly $5,000 on rural instructional expenditures, which is lower than the national average, and Indiana also ranks in the top 10 states that incur higher student transportation costs. While Indiana graduation rates in rural school districts remain consistent at nearly 92%, Indiana's rural National Assessment of Educational Progress performance in math and reading shows that students in grades four and eight underperform when compared with students in other states (Showalter et al., 2019).

Hispanic Students and Indiana Schools

Approximately 7% of Indiana residents identify as Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). According to the Indiana Department of Education's Compass (IDOE: Compass) data (2020), nearly 13% of Indiana students identify as Hispanic. In 2019, the state of Indiana published a report on English Language Learners (ELLs) and estimated that:

> More than 112,000 Indiana students speak a language other than English at home, and there are over 275 different languages represented in Indiana schools. Of these, over 50,000 students have been formally identified as English learners due

> to limited proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing academic English (Indiana Department of Education, 2019).

It is important to note that while the report addressed identifying potential ELL students as well as developing programs that supported the success of ELL students, the report did not specifically address the needs of immigrant students in rural school districts.

In 2016, the Indiana Latino Institute partnered with the Indiana University Public Policy Institute to address issues facing the Latino community. The report found that while PK–12 public school student enrollment has increased over the past 10 years, less than 40% of Latinos graduated from high school (Indiana University Public Policy Institute, 2016). In 2014, of the nearly 5% of Hispanic students who attended public schools, more than 50% were identified as ELL students. While the study examined Indiana's 291 counties in terms of Hispanic students who received free and or reduced cost lunch as well as special education services, the most significant key findings came from participant interviews with members of the Latino community. Regarding education, participants were concerned with the barriers that prevented students from being successful (e.g., lack of access to bilingual educators and low expectations for Latino students).

Rural Idaho

I have been fortunate to teach in a myriad of settings, but my experiences as a rural educator working with immigrant students in the Western region of the United States have had a lasting impact on my life, both personally and professionally.

Sarah

I began my 5th year of teaching Social Studies at an alternative high school in Idaho. The high school served roughly 100 students, most of whom had been labeled "outcasts" by the community. That year, I met Sarah, 12th-grade Latina originally from California who lived with her mother, grandparents, and siblings. Sarah would come to my classroom during the hour-long open lunch period to eat. We talked about her boyfriend, her sister's Quinceañera, and her plans. I adored Sarah; she was one of my brightest students and was on track to graduate with honors. Over a few months, I learned that Sarah and her family were undocumented and that she had made the decision to attend the alternative high school because it was viewed by many within the community as a safe environment for many undocumented students. As time went on, Sarah and I became close, and I was fortunate to meet her family and attend her sister's Quinceañera. A few months before graduation, Sarah became pregnant and confided that she wanted to be married before the baby came. Her boyfriend, an undocumented laborer who worked in the potato fields, was concerned with the attention Sarah's pregnancy might bring to the family. To this day, I remember a wonderful young woman who carried the weight of the world on her shoulders. Thoughts of worry and stress consumed her; Where would they live? Would the local Catholic Church marry them? Was nursing school an option? At that point in my life, I knew nothing about DACA and how to help. I never asked Sarah about how her immigration status impacted her life. I opened my classroom space to her and showed I cared through empathetic words, but I failed in action. I did not educate myself on immigration laws, and although I considered our relationship closer than most student/teacher relationships, I could have done more.

When I returned from Idaho, I spent the last 3 years of my PK–12 teaching experience at Collins High School in rural Indiana. As an English/language arts teacher, I taught high school

students at every level, from remedial English to AP Literature. Given that the school had a white population of more than 90%, I began adding diversity to the literature curriculum (e.g., Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and August Wilson); however, given the school's Hispanic population of less than 3%, I neglected to include many of the Latinx authors that had grounded my curriculum in Idaho (e.g., Sandra Cisneros, Julia Alvarez, and Denice Frohman).

As I transitioned out of PK–12 education and into a doctoral program, I knew that my interests revolved around teachers and immigrant students. Still, the desire to become a rural educational researcher came later, when I had moved to the country. The more I spoke with community members of Ririe about the current conditions of the schools, the more interested I became in understanding the challenges rural school districts faced.

Ririe Elementary School

Us & Them[6]

We encourage parents to come in and get to know us.
To see the school, to see what happens here.
Some parents will, other parents won't.

At first, they're kind of lost, but
we have enough other Spanish speakers,
they step in and help them.

Most of them speak English pretty well,
but their understanding is still behind.
There's a lot of vocabulary that they don't know.

It impacts how you teach.
To teach things differently, slower in parts.
It's hard.

[6] The following poem was created from transcript data with Linda Welch.

This year-long study was situated within a rural community that has experienced a steady increase in the enrollment of Hispanic students over the past 10 years. According to the Indiana Department of Education's Compass (IDOE: Compass) data (2020), from the 2005–2006 academic year to the 2019–2020 academic year, the total enrollment of Hispanic students increased by 10%. The number of students identified as ELL has also increased, from 2% in 2005–2006 to 22% in 2019–2020. Currently, the Shelton County school district does not have a Teaching English as a Second Language program but relies heavily on bilingual aides to serve as support for ELL students.

Initial Experience

In the spring of 2019, I conducted an exploratory study that sought to make meaning of educators' experiences working with immigrant students. I deliberately selected Ririe Elementary for my research and used purposeful sampling for participant selection. Three factors served as the criteria for this site: a) location, b) demographics, and c) snowball sampling. Ririe Elementary School, a PK–6 elementary school, one of three elementary schools within Shelton County School District, serves a population of fewer than 200 students. According to the Indiana Department of Education's Compass (IDOE: Compass) data (2020), the enrollment for Shelton County School District, for the 2018–2019 academic year, was approximately 2,000 students. Shelton County School district is a member of the Indiana Small and Rural Schools Association. The NCES defines rural school districts in terms of distance from urbanized areas and urban clusters. The state of Indiana classifies the Shelton County School District as a remote, rural location, situated more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and 10 miles from an urban cluster.

According to 2018–2019 the Indiana Department of Education's Compass (IDOE: Compass) data (2020), Ririe Elementary School's Hispanic population is 28%, and 18% of

students identify as ELLs. The teaching staff is 100% white women, with 30% of staff members having 0–5 years of teaching experience. Two of the paraprofessionals self-identify as Latina, female, and Spanish speakers. The demographics of the Shelton County School District fit with my narrative; white, female, monolingual educators working with diverse populations of students.

In the spring of 2019, I began recruiting participants for an exploratory study by contacting the school's principal. After purposeful sampling, subjects received an email inviting them to participate in the study, and the email specified that their participation was voluntary. I contacted the principal of Ririe Elementary School via email, and she gave written permission for data collection to be conducted in their facility. For this study, the criteria for participants included: a) educators and b) educators who had been working with immigrant children. The principal shared my recruitment letter with her staff, and I initially recruited five participants for the study: the principal, two teachers, and two paraprofessionals. The two paraprofessionals identified as bilingual, immigrant educators.

I chose to focus on two different populations of rural educators within the school: white, U.S.-born teachers and immigrant paraprofessionals. Each population of educators brought a unique perspective in terms of their experiences working with immigrant students. Participants in this study were educators of adult age (18 years and older) who worked in the Shelton County School District of Ririe, Indiana. In May 2019, I conducted three semi-structured interviews and three classroom observations. The main goal of the exploratory study was to familiarize myself with the school community. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, I needed to establish trusting relationships with my participants.

"They don't know. They don't know where we've been, how we got here."

(*Initial Study Interview, May 10, 2019*)

Daniela and Emilia

Of the five participants I recruited for the study, two self-identified as immigrant paraprofessionals; Latinas who specifically worked with the school's immigrant student population, which included undocumented students from Honduras and Guatemala. For 2 months, I was able to observe and interview Daniela and her sister Emilia. During that time, they shared stories of working with immigrant students who often felt ignored by their female, white, middle-class teachers and by parents who had difficulties communicating with both the school staff and administration. Long after our 1-hour interviews had concluded and when my recording application was turned off, Daniela and Emilia seemed to let their guard down, and the conversations quickly became emotionally charged. Feelings ranged from gratitude for having one another as a support system to feelings of embarrassment and inadequacy. For Daniela, the school administration heavily relied on her to serve as a bridge between the staff and the immigrant population that had been rapidly increasing over the past decade. Both women wore many hats throughout the school day that included administering state tests, 1:1 teaching, lunch/recess/aftercare duties, translating weekly classroom newsletters, and acting as interpreters, to name a few. From our conversations, it was clear to me that they loved their students, but that their daily duties were beginning to take a toll on them, and they grappled with the decision to seek employment elsewhere. Both Daniela and Emilia felt an incredible sense of responsibility in working with and caring for immigrant students and parents. After the school bell rang at 3:15 p.m., Daniela and Emilia would receive text messages and phone calls from parents asking about everything from school lunch balances to immunization records. They

discussed tensions that arose in preparing students for state testing while receiving no formal guidance from the students' teachers of record. In speaking about their current teaching experiences, the conversations would often revert to their past experiences as immigrant students. They expressed concern for the subtractive schooling practices that "divest these youth of important social and cultural resources, leaving them progressively vulnerable to academic failure" (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 3). They felt frustrated by the lack of resources and overall support from the school district. Just as teachers shamed students for speaking Spanish in the classroom, so too were Daniela and Emilia chastened by the other paraprofessionals for not only conversing in their heritage language with one another but for addressing immigrant students in Spanish. The women would often become visibly emotional when speaking about their current students, as well as when recalling memories of "othering." Despite this, during the interviews, Daniela and Emilia expressed choosing to work with immigrant students who lived within the "borderlands" of language and culture because of their similar experiences. In small ways, they saw themselves as advocates for the students, families, and greater Latino/a community. For my participants, their identity directly impacted how they interacted with the immigrant students and their families; thus, their daily decisions as educators became a series of negotiations between their personal and professional selves.

During the summer of 2019, I made plans to return to Ririe Elementary in the fall and collect data for my dissertation. The exploratory study shed light on the specific issues facing rural educators within Shelton County (e.g., lack of funding, the need for bilingual educators, programs that supported ELL students), and I was anxious to begin classroom observation with my participants in the fall.

Although I had spent 10 years as an educator, I had forgotten that schools are in a constant state of flux and that change is inevitable; Ririe Elementary School was no exception. Of the five participants in my exploratory study, four did not return to the school for the 2019–2020 academic year. After more than 30 years as an educator, Judy, the principal, decided to retire. The two paraprofessionals, Daniela and her sister Emilia, left the school for better opportunities. Both women had worked part-time at Ririe Elementary and did not receive health insurance through the school district. Finally, Dave, the beloved sixth-grade teacher for more than 40 years, passed away suddenly after a heart attack just 1 month before school began. The community was devastated, and I was fortunate enough to attend his funeral. The outpouring of grief spoke to Dave's dedication to his students and the community.

I took Dave's loss, as well as the loss of my other participants, very personally. Selfishly, I was concerned about the continuation of my dissertation research. Would the new principal permit me to research the school? Would I be able to recruit new teachers for my study? If so, would I be able to cultivate meaningful relationships with my new participants? I was also concerned about the students at the school. Daniela had served as the bilingual paraprofessional for nearly 10 years, and she was the bridge between the school and the Hispanic community. Would the school be able to hire another bilingual paraprofessional?

The Study: Educators' Experiences Working With and Caring for Latinx Immigrant Students

Fortunately, because I live in the community, I was able to stay informed about the hiring of the new principal. Through snowball sampling, I was able to continue my research at Ririe Elementary School. The participants for my dissertation research include the new principal, a new paraprofessional, and two classroom teachers: The second-grade teacher is new to this

study, and the third-grade teacher agreed to continue as a participant in this study. Both the second- and third-grade teachers currently teach immigrant students. The paraprofessional, originally born in Mexico, is the only bilingual educator in this study. Of the four participants in this study, three identify as female.

Table 2. *Participant Profiles*

Name	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Teaching Experience and Education Level
Linda Welch	Female	65	White	34 years Master's degree Elementary
Jessica Reed	Female	32	White	Nine years of teaching Bachelor's degree
Verónica Salinas	Female	24	Hispanic	One year paraprofessional Non-certified Nursing student
Matt Foley	Male	45	White	15 years Master's degree Elementary teacher/principal

Research Puzzle

To understand how rural educators work with and care for immigrant students, this study addressed the following questions: (a) How do rural educators describe their work with immigrant students and their families? (b) How do rural educators negotiate the "space" between a professional and a personal identity? (c) How do rural educators define and demonstrate an ethic of care?

Welcome: Back-to-School Registration

August 6, 2019: Registro con un Intérprete (Registration with an Interpreter)

In mid-June, I had my initial meeting with Matt, the new principal of Ririe Elementary School. We discussed when would be the best time for me to begin my classroom observations

and agreed on September to give the students and teachers time to settle into the new school year. In the meantime, Matt suggested that I attend the back-to-school registration in early August. The district had decided on two days for parents to register their children. Tuesday, August 6th would specifically be for Spanish-speaking families, and although Daniela and Emilia no longer worked at Ririe, they had agreed to serve as interpreters. Registration began at noon and ended at 6:00 p.m. Therefore, I made plans to attend the registration mid-afternoon. The drive from my house to the school took approximately 10 minutes.

Registro con un Intérprete

Walking toward the school building, I clutch my cell phone tightly in my right hand. I am nervous. Although this is not my first time visiting the school, it will be the first time that I "officially" begin data collection. It is early August, and today I will be observing Shelton County's back-to-school registration. "Registro con un Intérprete," is specifically for Spanish-speaking families and students. I am not exactly sure who will be attending this event in addition to students and families, but my meeting with Matt, the principal, was encouraging. Not only has he agreed to be one of my participants in my study, but he has also given me full access to the school. Our first meeting was quite positive, as we discussed the needs of the community.

It is 3:00 p.m. I immediately notice how quiet the building is, and as I turn to my right, toward the main office, I see a familiar face, Emilia, and smile as I make my way toward her. I am sad that Emilia is no longer employed with the district, but I am grateful to see her at the school today; she is volunteering her time to help her sister with registration. Daniela, who has accepted a full-time position at the junior/senior high school, no longer works at Ririe Elementary. Still, she has agreed to help the principal until the new principal hires her replacement. I'm not exactly sure how she will split her time between Ririe and the junior/senior

high school, so I hope they find a bilingual paraprofessional soon. School starts in less than 2 weeks.

The main office is small, consisting of the school secretary's desk, the principal's office, the nurse's station, staff bathrooms, and the teacher's lounge. Mrs. Cole, a white, monolingual woman in her early fifties, has been the school secretary for several years. I greet her as I approach her desk, unsure of where I should go. Across the hallway is the technology room and wrapped around the walls are desktop computers. Eight families, all Hispanic, are patiently waiting as Daniela and Emilia attend to each of them. The computer program, which they will use to register, is in English. Daniela, Emilia, and even some of the students serve as interpreters, walking their families through the registration process.

Standing in the hallway, I feel exposed and unsure. I am hyper-aware of my presence, and I clutch my gray bag; the contents inside my bag include a yellow notepad and several colorful pens. I walk down the hallway, past the row of framed photographs, and wait. For what, I am not sure. As I stand in the hallway, pretending to be invisible, a Hispanic man approaches Mrs. Cole's desk with a young boy. Trying to remain inconspicuous, I suddenly remember this student from last year, Pedro, a third grader from Honduras. Daniela approaches them and hugs Pedro. After conversing with the man, Daniela tells Mrs. Cole that Pedro's uncle would like to register the boy at the junior/senior high school. Still standing in the hallway, I gather from the conversation between Daniela, Pedro's uncle, and Mrs. Cole that last year, Pedro's father had registered his son under an alias.

In English, Daniela asks Pedro if he is excited to attend the junior/senior high school. Under her breath but loud enough for me to hear, Mrs. Cole comments, "His grades aren't that good," and I wonder if the uncle senses Mrs. Cole's judgmental tone. Now speaking directly to

Daniela, Mrs. Cole ends the conversation by informing Daniela that Pedro's uncle will have to return the next day while she inquires about updating Pedro's identity and grade level with the district's central office. Daniela translates from the uncle; he agrees to return to Ririe the following day at noon. In a follow-up conversation, Daniela was hopeful that the school district would place Pedro in the appropriate grade level. Her new position at the junior/senior high school would allow her to check in with Pedro throughout the school year.

While this conversation was taking place, I had a clear view of Emilia in the technology room. As Daniela was saying goodbye to Pedro and his uncle, I quietly slipped into the technology room and sat at a back table. As I watched Daniela and Emilia circulate around the room, I realized who was missing from this registration. Where were the teachers? Where was the principal? Why were Daniela and Emilia left to register these families without assistance? A tremendous feeling of helplessness consumed me. I would love to be able to help Daniela and Emilia because clearly, they are on their own. My Spanish is very limited. For years, as a teacher, I helped register families during back-to-school nights, for financial aid, and for SAT/ACT exams, but for the first time, I feel useless. Daniela returns to help her sister. As the families patiently wait, I observe a young girl translating the registration form for her mother.

CHAPTER THREE. CHOOSING TO MAKE MEANING OF THE WORLD NARRATIVELY

Humans lead *storied lives* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), and, as an emerging narrative inquirer, I am embarked on a journey with my participants built on trust and cultivated with great care. There is a vulnerability that exists within this reciprocal, dynamic relationship, and stories serve as a window into the multilayered complexities of ever-changing experiences. Narrative inquiry is unique within qualitative research because, as researchers begin to make meaning of participants' lives, researchers come to know themselves.

Grounded in autobiographies (Phillion, 2002), narrative inquiry focuses on understanding and making meaning of experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As an emerging researcher, I choose to make meaning of the world narratively, and, as you follow me on this journey, I hope that you will gain a sense of the complexity of narrative inquiry as a methodology. My dissertation is focused on a particular wonder: rural educators' experiences working with Latinx immigrant students. This wonder leads to complex narrative threads that are interwoven and difficult to disentangle—"stories lived and told" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). Throughout this dissertation, illuminations in the form of "livings, tellings, relivings, and retellings" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 71) serve as a guide, as you come to know the students and educators of Ririe Elementary School, as well as the community.

In Chapter Two, I began with a poem, a *retelling* that highlighted the ties between the town of Ririe and the school community. The poem, which is an arrangement of words from one of my participant interviews with Linda Welch, whom you will be introduced to later in this chapter, showcases the multiple ways I experimented with narrative form to provide you, the reader, with a more nuanced understanding of this narrative inquiry. Demographic data on rural

education and immigrant students in the Midwest embodied the *telling* of rural school communities, including Ririe Elementary School. Finally, two narratives that exemplified *retellings* coupled my past experiences as a rural educator in Idaho with my entry into the field as a classroom-based narrative researcher.

In both chapters, these narratives of stories lived and told actively shaped my dissertation research, which focused on educators' experiences working with and caring for Latinx immigrant students in rural populations within the midwestern United States. It is important to note that while the *livings* and *tellings* are an integral part of a narrative inquiry, it is in the *relivings* and *retellings* that researchers begin to make meaning of narratives of experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The reciprocal relationship between stories lived, told, retold, and relived (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) allows for what Lessard et al. (2018) posited as unfolding:

> We do this in order to create openings where readers can imagine future possibilities of lives unfolding and becoming, rather than holding on to a fixed story. We also draw the reader in so that their own lives may be shaped by what they come to know about the participants and themselves. (p. 202)

In this chapter, I invite you to continue on my journey of becoming a narrative inquirer. I begin by briefly discussing the literature that grounded my understanding of narrative inquiry. I then delve into narrative inquiry methods that guided my thinking and actions as I entered into the field. I conclude this chapter with four separate, in-depth portraits of my participants, in the form of *tellings and retellings.*

Introduction to Narrative Inquiry

Narrative is both phenomenon and method and has an extensive history both in and out of education (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Emerging from the postmodern era of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), narrative relies on several of the social science fields

including history, philosophy, anthropology, psychology, and linguistics. Jerome Bruner advanced narrative inquiry as a rigorous methodology within social science research (Kim, 2016). Bruner (1986) identified two modes of thought, *pragmatic* and *narrative*, as ways for humans to come to know and understand what is meant by truth and reality. The pragmatic mode of thinking is found within quantitative research and "leads to good theory, tight analysis, logical proof, sound argument, and empirical discovery guided by reasoned hypothesis" (Bruner, 1986, p. 13). Focusing on human experiences and actions the narrative mode of thinking "incorporates the feelings, goals, perceptions, values of the people whom we want to understand, and thus also leads to ambiguity and complexity" (Kim, 2016, p. 11). As a way of legitimizing narrative inquiry within social science research, Bruner (1986) posited that pragmatic and narrative modes of thinking "come to live side by side" (p. 43), complementing one another, thus offering further validation of narrative work.

Adding to Bruner's (1986) work on the various types of thinking within narrative inquiry, Donald Polkinghorne focused on narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. Polkinghorne (1995) described the term *narrative* as "a discourse form in which events and happenings are configured into a temporal unity by means of a plot" (p. 5) and then went on to define narrative inquiry as a form of qualitative research as:

> A linguistic form uniquely suited for displaying human existence as situated action. Narrative descriptions exhibit human activity as purposeful engagement in the world. Narrative is the type of discourse composition that draws together diverse events, happenings, and actions of human lives into thematically unified goal-directed processes. (p.5)

Both Bruner (1986) and Polkinghorne (1995) recognized the importance of paradigmatic and narrative-type inquiry complementing one another. Polkinghorne (1995) posited two paradigmatic types of *analysis of narratives* and *narrative analysis* as ways of knowing. *Analysis*

of narratives uses the paradigmatic process to collect stories as data and analyze them, moving from stories to themes. *Narrative analysis* uses narrative cognition to focus data into a cohesive plot. In further developing these narrative paradigms, Bruner (1986) and Polkinghorne (1995) highlighted the importance of "human activity as purposeful engagement" (p. 5) not only within the social sciences but within the field of educational research.

Narrative Inquiry in Educational-based Research

According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), the study of narrative focuses on the human experience as a holistic quality. The basis of narrative inquiry is grounded in "mutual storytelling and restorying" (p. 4), in which the voices of both the researcher and participant become known. Narrative inquiry allows for caring relationships to be established (Noddings, 1986) that not only promote a more equitable relationship between researcher and participant but also allow for true collaboration. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 6). These experiences occur over time in a fluid motion and draw from past, present, and future events. According to Chase (2011), as researchers come to know the experiences of their participants, the relationship between them becomes entangled, "allowing for co-constructed meaning of selves, realities, and identities" (p. 422). Narrative inquiry is much more than the retelling of stories; rather, it situates those experiences within a larger context.

F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin (1998) first introduced narrative inquiry into the field of educational research. Grounding their work in Dewey's theory of experience and educational philosophy, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) defined narrative inquiry as:

> A way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people's lives, both individual and social. (p. 20)

These interactions are categorized by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) into three dimensions of narrative inquiry: temporality, sociality, and place. Huber et al. (2011) unpacked these "common places" as a way of further distinguishing narrative inquiry from other methodologies. Temporality refers to the "place, things, and events" that a participant experiences and encompasses their past, present, and future. Sociality refers to the social conditions found within experiences. These social conditions comprise the "cultural, social, institutional, and linguistic narratives" (Huber et al., 2011, p. 5) that are experienced both by the researcher and the participant. Place refers to events that take place in a particular place or places which help to situate events. Focusing on the researcher/participant relationships, Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) argued that narrative inquiry was the:

> Beginning with respect for ordinary lived experience not only a valorizing of individual's experience but also an exploration of the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individual's experiences were constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted – but in a way that begins and ends that inquiry in the storied lives of the people involved. Narrative inquirers study an individual's experiences in the world, and through the study, seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others. (p. 42)

As stories unfold, the researcher and participant enter into an entwined relationship comprising of shared experiences. As leading scholars in the field, Clandinin and Connelly created a foundation of what narrative inquiry is within educational research.

Becoming A Narrative Inquirer

Walking in the Midst

I chose narrative inquiry because I was genuinely interested in the experiences of educators at Ririe Elementary School, specifically, how they worked with and cared for Latinx immigrant students. To begin to make meaning of experience, I entered this three-dimensional narrative inquiry space filled with trepidation. As an outsider to the community, "walking in the midst" (Phillion, 2002) meant that I was entering a story that was continuously unfolding. To immerse myself in the school community, I had to center my understanding of experience. I had to think narratively. Grounded in Dewey's (1938) work on experience (i.e., interaction, continuity, and situation/place), I immersed myself in Clandinin and Connelly's (1990, 2000) conceptualization of experience and story.

Place

My experience of becoming a narrative inquirer is situated in a small, rural, farming community in Indiana. How I came to know this place began with an inquiry into the school's past. Before I entered the field, I spent a tremendous amount of time pouring over archived newspaper articles that spanned eight decades. Late into the night, as if conjuring ghosts from long ago, I was engrossed in Ririe's past (i.e., basketball highlights from the 1920s, Christmas programs during the 1930s, information on P.T.A. meetings from the 1950s, "get acquainted" back to school events in the 1960s). Additionally, I read announcements of births, first communions, weddings, and deaths–anything that situated the school within the larger context of the community. I then reached out to the local historian, Ruby, who provided me with additional information on the families of Ririe and the history of the school. The story that surprised me the most was Ririe's long history with migrant families. In the 1970s, the Shelton County School

District collaborated with local religious organizations to offer summer classes for migrant students. This made me wonder how Ririe's past experiences with migrant students and families affected its current immigrant student population, specifically undocumented students.

Interaction

Relationships are at the core of what narrative inquirers do (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). From the beginning, I hoped to develop authentic, reciprocal relationships with my future participants. I was aware that each relationship had to be carefully crafted, honoring the experiences of my participants as individuals, as well as my own. Negotiating relationships with the educators of Ririe Elementary School took time and patience. As I began to enter the story with my participants, I welcomed narrative thinking. Developing these relationships meant navigating both the *personal* and *social*. As I began to interact with my participants, I looked inward, making note of my emotions, reactions, and emerging tensions in my researcher journals. After each interaction, I would spend time looking outward, reflecting on both formal and informal conversations, once again, making notes in my researcher journals. These journal reflections were foundational to becoming a narrative inquirer. As I moved between field texts, "turning inward, watching outward" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) guided me as I began to make meaning, using reflexive practices, in order to gain a deeper sense of who each of my participants were as individuals.

In this chapter, I illuminate these negotiated interactions by sharing significant moments of the first interviews conducted with participants. In subsequent chapters, I discuss how my relationships with my participants evolved.

Continuity

By far, the most challenging part of becoming a narrative inquirer has been simultaneously thinking about the past, present, and future. As I way of making meaning of the complexity of narrative inquiry, I began to categorize the storied layers in the form of *livings*, *tellings*, *relivings*, and *retellings*. Throughout this inquiry, *livings* and *tellings* represent the narrative methods of being in the field. Later, as I reflect on those experiences and interpret field texts (i.e., field journals, researcher memos, researcher journals, transcribed interviews) stories unfolded into *relivings* and *retellings*. Transitioning from field texts to research texts meant looking backward to recall past experiences, as well as looking forward, imaging future experiences.

Initial Entry Into the Field

For a narrative inquirer, transitions at the beginning and the end of an inquiry can be quite dramatic; therefore, participant-researcher relationships must be negotiated carefully (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In Chapter One, I discussed the significance of my relationship with Anne, who served as a gatekeeper for my entry into both the community and the school. In January 2019, I contacted the principal, Mrs. Miller via email, inquiring about Ririe as a potential research site. Mrs. Miller had served as principal at Ririe for 10 years and would be retiring at the end of the school year. I felt a tremendous amount of stress as I drafted the recruitment email to her and shared my concerns with Anne during our evening kitchen-table conversations. Mrs. Miller was another gatekeeper for both the teachers at the school and the new principal who would be replacing her. As I clicked on the "send" tab of my carefully worded email, countless scenarios played out in my imagination. What if the email went to her "junk folder"? What if she deleted my email because she didn't recognize my name? What if she

denied my request for fear of exposing immigrant students and families? Questions of "what if" consumed me. Unbeknown to me, the next day, Anne, who periodically worked at the school as a substitute teacher, followed up with the principal on my behalf. Later that day, I had received an email, followed by a phone call, from Mrs. Miller inviting me to meet with her. Mrs. Miller, along with two teachers and two paraprofessionals, were recruited for my initial study that sought to make meaning of rural educators' experiences with immigrant students. Thanks to my relationship with Anne, I was given full access to the teachers and staff of Ririe Elementary School. As an emerging narrative inquirer, preparing to work in the three-dimensional space, I was mindful that a narrative inquiry is grounded in relationships.

The following four in-depth portraits of my participants represent *tellings and retellings*. Each portrait illuminates significant moments that arose from my first formal interview with each participant. Initially, I was interested in the connection between their personal and professional identities; therefore, questions from interview one focused on their past schooling experiences, history with the school and community, and experiences working with immigrant students. After the interviews, I listened to the audio recordings before transcribing the data. Once I had printed out a hard copy of each transcript, I read and reread the transcribed data several times. I began to narratively code my field texts by identifying significant words and phrases that were gleaned from each interview. As I immersed myself in each conversation, I felt closer to my participants. Each portrait is structured to provide you, the reader, with a sense of how I entered into co-created relationships with the educators of Ririe Elementary School. Excerpts from interview one showcase the *telling* of my participants' experiences. Additionally, I then provide excerpts from my researcher journals as a way of expressing how I began thinking narratively as I entered a negotiated relationship with each participant and began to make

meaning of each relationship. Collectively, these portraits embody narrative inquiry methodology and methods because they highlight the qualities of relationships. Each portrait represents the intimate relationships that exist between a researcher and participant through the sharing of stories and engrossment in participants' lived experiences.

Linda Welch

I first met Linda in May of 2019 when she agreed to participate in my initial study.[7] Our first interactions had been a series of professional emails, back and forth, in which I briefly described my study and scheduled days and times to establish classroom observations and interviews. Classroom observations were vital to my narrative inquiry because I wanted to gain a rich sense of how each participant interacted with their Latinx immigrant students, both personally and professionally.

Despite never having met Linda before our first interview, there was a level of comfort that I had not anticipated, and I attributed this to Linda's relationship with Anne. The two women had not only worked together for more than 30 years, but each had been an active participant in the lives of each other's children (e.g., Anne's daughter, my future sister-in-law, had been a student in Linda's first-grade class).

On the morning of our first interview, as I made the 10-minute drive from my house to the school, I was excited to return to a school setting. My teaching career began in a PK–8 Catholic elementary school in Indianapolis, where I taught sixth grade. Memories of a lively, active building filled my mind. In addition to those fond memories, I also recalled the stress of

[7] As noted in Chapter One, Linda is the only participant who contributed to both the initial study and my dissertation research.

teaching in May and trying to keep students on task as summer quickly approached. I wondered if I had made a mistake in asking teachers to be interviewed in May, knowing full well that they were exhausted from state testing that had occurred just a month prior. Filled with excitement and apprehension, I made my way toward the school, hoping for the best.

The interview took place mid-morning in Linda's classroom. We met during her prep period, sitting at a table toward the back of the classroom. On the table, I placed two voice recording devices, my yellow notepad, and interview documents (i.e., participant consent form, interview questions). I began the interview by briefly sharing my teaching background with her in the hope that we could connect as teachers. I wanted to establish a rapport with Linda; developing an intimate relationship with my participant meant moving in close to make sense of her lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

I highlighted my years of experience as a rural educator. I was hesitant to reveal too much, but at the same time, I did not want Linda to think that I had forgotten my teaching roots. I then explained why I was interested in researching at Ririe Elementary School. While attempting to negotiate a relationship with Linda during our first interview, I also knew that by explaining my research, I was negotiating purpose. While I was entering Linda's life as an educational researcher, I hoped that by connecting with her as a teacher, we could begin to build a reciprocal relationship, grounded in trust.

Once I shared enough about myself to hopefully make Linda feel comfortable, I began the interview by asking Linda about her own educational and teaching background. Born and raised in Shelton County, Linda grew up in the town of Ririe, attending Ririe Elementary School and the Shelton Jr./Sr. High School which are situated approximately 10 miles apart from each another. Linda told me that she had always enjoyed school and often "played" the teacher as a

child. I found that Linda's intimate knowledge of Ririe Elementary set her apart from the other participants.

In high school, Linda described herself as a quiet student who did well in her classes. I made note of this personality trait in my researcher journal. For future classroom observations, I was curious about what role Linda's identity as a student had in her interactions with students. After graduating from high school, Linda attended a large midwestern university, where she studied elementary education. Linda returned to Ririe and began teaching first and second grade, before switching to third grade at the beginning of her 5th year of teaching. In addition to her 35 years of teaching experience, Linda holds a Master's degree in Elementary Education. At the time of our interview in May of 2019, Linda planned to teach an additional 2 years before retiring from the school district.

I was also interested in Linda's role as a community member. I was curious if she interacted with immigrant families outside of the school. Of my four participants, Linda is the only one who lives in Shelton County and has strong ties to the community; she has lived in Ririe for more than 60 years. As she does with the school, Linda has intimate knowledge of the community's past and present.

> *I've been teaching at Ririe for 35 years. I grew up in Ririe, I went to school here at Ririe Elementary and graduated from Shelton. That gives me a little bit different view on things than people coming in from the outside. For some of these kids [students], I grew up with their parents or grandparents. I love Ririe. I could have transferred to one of the bigger schools, but I like the small community feel. I like the family atmosphere* (Initial Study, Interview 1, May 10, 2019)

Linda identifies as white, female, and monolingual. She is a single mother of two adopted children from Asia, and I was curious about how Linda's experiences as a mother influenced her teaching, specifically with her immigrant students.

> *Seeing how my younger daughter struggled helps me to see a little more of what these kids are going through when they're trying to switch languages. It's been*

> *really interesting, some of them, when they do switch over to English, they totally stop, they lose their Spanish, which I think is terrible. I keep telling them that 'Don't do that. Keep speaking Spanish because that's important and that's your culture and that's your history.* (Initial Study Interview, May 10, 2019)

As our first interview ended, Linda and I scheduled the second interview and discussed my return in the fall to conduct my dissertation research. As I thanked Linda for her time and headed home, I wondered how my relationship with Linda would evolve. Several days after the interview, I had a chance to listen to the audio recording and make notes in my researcher journal. In the following excerpt, I reflect on some of the critical moments that stood out to me during this initial inquiry.

> *I found it to be really hopeful that Linda encouraged her students' who were bilingual to speak both languages and she was grateful that Ririe had bilingual support staff that could work with the students. But I can't help but wonder, with only two bilingual aides in a school of approximately 150 students, how can two adults care for the fifty students who have been identified as ELLs? How does Linda teach students who are non-native English speakers? From my own teaching experiences, while I taught immigrant and undocumented students, I was never in a position where I had to translate for a student. Honestly, I'm not sure what I would have done. How do we as educators best support students and families?* (Personal Journal, May 14, 2019)

The first interview with Linda offered glimpses into the school, as well as the community and my hope that was subsequent conversations with Linda would further reveal how the school worked with immigrant student populations. Throughout the transcribed interview and my researcher journal, I made notes of what was said, but also topics that were not discussed.

In the summer of 2019, I was able to recruit Matt Foley, Jessica Reed, and Verónica Salinas through snowball sampling for my dissertation research. The following participant portraits are once again based on Interview 1 and my researcher journals.

Matt Foley

Of the five participants for my initial study, only Linda remained at Ririe Elementary when I returned in the fall of 2019 to continue my research. To recruit additional participants, I wanted to make sure that the incoming principal was supportive of my presence in the school. I am grateful to Mrs. Miller, who served as another gatekeeper. As part of several transition meetings that she had with Matt, the new principal, she spoke on my behalf, and when I contacted Matt in July of 2019, he was happy to meet with me. Not only did he agree to become a participant, but he gave me full access to the school. Matt allowed me not only to recruit educators who worked with immigrant students but also to attend events outside of interviews and classroom observations (e.g., parent orientations, staff meetings).

I formally met Matt in July 2019 when he invited me to meet him in his school office. Dressed in casual clothes, Matt appeared excited about his new role as principal. We briefly spoke about my study and its purpose and logistics, and I explained why I had chosen to research Ririe. Although I was nervous about meeting the new principal, the meeting went well. Matt seemed interested in my research and offered to support me in any way that he could. Our conversation then turned to changes in staffing. The two English as a Second Language (ESL) paraprofessionals, Daniela and Emilia had left Ririe Elementary, and Dave[8] had passed away unexpectedly. While all three educators had served as participants in my initial study, I was most concerned with how their loss would impact the community. The school was in flux, but I was surprised by Matt's cool demeanor. He seemed optimistic that he would be able to fill the two ESL positions and find a new sixth-grade teacher- less than a month before school began. In order not to overwhelm my participants at the start of the school year, we agreed that I would

[8] In Chapter Two, I recruited five participants for my initial study: the principal, two teachers, and two paraprofessionals. Dave, the 6th grade teacher, passed away in the summer of 2019.

begin data collection in September. I wished Matt luck as he prepared for a new school year. As I headed home, I was overcome with a mix of sadness and hopefulness.

Matt became the principal of Ririe Elementary at the start of the 2019–2020 academic year. This would be a year of "firsts" for Matt: his first year at Ririe, the first time he would hold the position of principal at a school, and his first experience as a rural educator. Originally from the Southwest region of the United States, Matt has been an educator for 16 years. After graduating from a large midwestern university with a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education, Matt began his career by teaching third and fourth grade for 10 years in an urban setting. He taught English language arts and mathematics at a public middle school for 3 years before transitioning into administration. He served as a middle school assistant principal for 2 years before accepting the position of principal at Ririe Elementary School.

My first interview with Matt took place in October 2019. Once again, we met in his office. I inquired about his educational background and teaching experiences to gain a better sense of his educational philosophy.

> *I've had a lot of experiences that have helped me here, as far as, learning how to deal with social-emotional difficulties and the socio-economic challenges that a lot of our students are facing. And I think those both are increasing and I think they're going to continue to increase.* (Interview 1, October 29, 2019)

Being sensitive to the fact that adjusting to a new school environment can be both rewarding and challenging, I was curious about how Matt's past experiences related to his new position as principal of Ririe Elementary. With nearly one-third of Ririe's population identifying as Hispanic and approximately one-quarter of students identifying as ELLs, I asked Matt how his past experiences as an educator related to working with immigrant students and families.

> *My Spanish is limited to three semesters, mandatory at [the university]. I have some girls in third grade who, on a daily basis, try to teach me one or two words, and it's not even necessarily a phrase but to make that effort. They've*

> *made a tremendous effort to learn and work on our language. I think you owe that to them, to at least attempt. You have to be able to laugh at your mistakes and it's ok to make that mistake because you're trying and the vast majority of them know that and appreciate that. I think, just trying to work with them. The community, here [Ririe], seems very understanding that ok, they [educators] may not know Spanish, but we have the basics to being able to build that so I can go find my other adult who can speak Spanish to a parent, or if we have a phone call, 'uno momento' and they understand, we need to go find someone who can get my message, even if it's quick and simple.* (Interview 1, October 29, 2019)

At the time of our first interview, Matt had been principal for nearly 3 months. In a sense, I had already learned quite a bit about Matt from his daily video announcements, which were live streamed through various social media outlets. Beginning in August 2019, each morning I would view Matt's daily announcements as a way of gaining a better sense of how he communicated with the students, faculty, staff, and families of Ririe Elementary.

A few days after my interview with Matt, I listened to the audio recording of the interview and made the following notes in my researcher journal:

> *While nearly 80% of Ririe Elementary students received free and reduced lunch, I get the sense that Matt views the community from a deficit perspective. At one point during the interview, he discussed the benefits of growing up in a two-parent household. He's been principal for nearly 3 months, I wonder what his interactions with families have been thus far.* (Personal Journal, November 2, 2019)

During our first interview, I found myself feeling quite protective of the school community, which was interesting, because like Matt, I was also a newcomer. I made note of this tension in my researcher journal and wondered if these feelings would emerge during subsequent interviews. Overall, I found the interview to be quite challenging because I was entering the inquiry space from an additive perspective. As I reflected on this researcher-participant dynamic, I thought about ways in which this relationship would need to be carefully worked at and negotiated over time.

Jessica Reed

I was first introduced to Jessica in the spring of 2019 by Mrs. Miller. At the time, she expressed that the end of the year was a busy time for her and that she did not have time to participate in the initial study; however, she was interested in participating in the fall because her incoming class would be made up of approximately one-third immigrant students.

I began observing Jessica's class in September of 2019; however, our first interview was not conducted until January of 2020. During the fall, Jessica was in the first trimester of her pregnancy with her first child. It was challenging to find a time when we could both meet, so we agreed that when Jessica was on maternity leave, I would come to her home for all three interviews.

At Jessica's request, the first interview took place in her home. I was happy to oblige because her son was barely a month old. The drive from my house to Jessica's took approximately 50 minutes, and as I drove, I wondered if Jessica minded the long commute back and forth to school each day. Her house was situated approximately 10 miles east of the Shelton County line. As I turned into Jessica's driveway, I made a mental note to ask her why she had decided to teach at Ririe, when her house was so close to several other school districts.

Overall, I felt prepared for the interview, remembering to bring multiple recording devices, a notepad, and several pens. While this would be the first time I had interviewed a participant outside of a school or office setting, I was excited to finally speak with Jessica. Over the past 3 months I had spent observing her classroom, she and I had had very few informal conversations, and I was looking forward to connecting with Jessica on a more personal level.

I was immediately surprised when Jessica invited me into her home. When we had scheduled the interview, she told me that her husband would be at work, so it would just be

Jessica, me, and the baby. However, when I arrived, her husband and two friends were working in the basement; they planned to convert the downstairs area into a daycare.

Not wanting to interrupt the home construction, I asked Jessica if she thought I should come back at a more opportune time. Jessica assured me that she was comfortable, and we began the interview by sitting at a large dining room table. Honestly, I was so concerned with my participants' comfort that I had not given any thought to my own. Jessica's large cat walked around on the table before plopping itself next to my notebook. I tried to remain focused as I turned on the voice recorder.

Jessica had grown up in a midwestern city outside of Shelton County. She attended public schools before receiving a degree in elementary education at a large midwestern university. At the time of the interview, Jessica had been an educator for the previous 9 years, 5 of which she had spent teaching second grade at Ririe Elementary.

Throughout the interview, Jessica was very candid about her experiences as a student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and about how those experiences affected her teaching. Jessica credits her mother with advocating for her throughout her PK–12 education. As she spoke, I was pleased that she felt comfortable sharing such a personal experience with me.

> *I had an IEP all throughout high school. I remember going into the meetings, not very often, but they, every once in a while, they did. I was told, I would never be a teacher, I would never graduate high school, or if I did, it would be with the basic Core 40, and I'd never go to college.* (Interview 1, January 30, 2020)

When I spoke with Jessica in January 2020, Shelton County School District was going through financial difficulties, and the school board was asking the taxpayers to pass a referendum for 8 years of support. Jessica was concerned about the future of her job, as well as for the longevity of Ririe Elementary School. Twice in Ririe's recent history, the Shelton County School district had seriously considered closing the school, but in both instances, the community rallied to "save"

the school. In my many conversations with community members (with confirmation by school board members), if the referenda had not passed, Ririe would have been closed and the elementary schools consolidated.

It was clear from our interview that Jessica was frustrated. In addition to concerns about Ririe's possible closure, Jessica was on maternity leave, and her replacement was a recent graduate with a degree in elementary education. Carrie, a white, bilingual female, would be filling in for Jessica until she returned from maternity leave at the beginning of March.

Although Jessica lives outside of Shelton County, she had been a part of the school community for 5 years. I asked her if she could speak about her experiences with the school community and how it has evolved.

> *Honestly, a steady slope down and it's been sneaky too. My first year, I was new, they [the students] didn't know me, I didn't know them, so they were on their best behavior. But every year behaviors have gotten worse and the immigrants have gotten to the point that they just don't care.* (Interview 1, January 30, 2020)

The long drive home gave me time to collect my thoughts. While I appreciated Jessica's honesty, there was a part of me that was slightly uncomfortable with how revealing the conversation had become. In my researcher journal, the following day, I made note of this critical moment and others as I reflected on my interview with Jessica.

> *On the one hand, I empathize with Jessica. I've been a teacher long enough to experience feelings of frustration and disillusion with the [educational] system. She speaks passionately and sees herself as an advocate for students who receive special education services. I also have experienced being in a situation where if a referendum did not pass, I would lose my job. With a newborn at home, Jessica is focused on providing for her family. In terms of Jessica's experiences working with diverse populations, I am still working through this. I want to compare the classroom observations with interview one. I hope that interviews two and three also shed some light on these experiences.* (Personal Journal, January 31, 2020)

I found my interview with Jessica to be quite challenging. I reread the first interview several times, making note of things Jessica said that surprised me. I found myself *leaning in*, moving back and forth between the transcribed interview and my researcher's journal.

Verónica Salinas

The students of Ririe Elementary School began the first 4 weeks of their new academic year without an ESL paraprofessional. In mid-September 2019, Verónica was hired to replace Daniela and Emilie. Almost by accident, I first met Verónica in the main office while I was waiting to attend the monthly staff meeting after school. As I entered the building, I noticed a Hispanic student standing in front of the secretary's desk. A few minutes later, a young Hispanic woman approached the desk and began conversing with the student in Spanish. The woman then turned to the secretary, Mrs. Cole, who is white, female, and monolingual. Based on context clues from their conversation in English, I gathered that the student was being dropped off at the wrong bus stop and needed help in rectifying the situation.

After the student had left, I approached the young woman and asked if she was the new ESL paraprofessional. Luckily, she was, and immediately a sense of relief washed over me. I am normally a shy person, but the way she interacted with both the student and Mrs. Cole led me to believe that she was the new staff member. I welcomed Verónica to the school and asked if I could contact her later that week about my study and becoming a participant. A few days later, we met during her prep period, and I was able to discuss my research in detail. After she reviewed and signed the consent form, we made plans to begin observations the following week.

Verónica, a Latina in her mid-twenties, is a bilingual paraprofessional at Ririe Elementary School. Born in Mexico, she emigrated to the United States with her parents as a toddler. Shortly after their arrival, her family relocated to a large midwestern city to be closer to

family. During this time, she attended a bilingual elementary school until her family moved to California. The family returned to the Midwest when Verónica was a teenager and she attended middle school and high school in the Indiana public school system. Currently, Verónica works two part-time jobs: as a paraprofessional at Ririe Elementary School and as a receptionist at a hotel. Also, Verónica is studying nursing at a local community college, while raising a son who is in third grade.

Our first interview took place at the end of October 2019. I began observing Verónica in September and during that time, we would often have informal conversations throughout the day. So, when we sat down for our first interview, the conversation felt more natural and organic than some interviews I had conducted with other study participants. Throughout the interview, I shared with Verónica glimpses of both my personal and professional identity. In addition to discussing my teaching background, I felt the need to reveal that I was the daughter of an immigrant and an Arab American who grew up in a multilingual, Muslim home.

I began by asking Verónica about her past experiences as a student. Although she was too young to attend schools in Mexico before coming to the United States, Verónica was able to share her experiences of being a bilingual student in U.S. public schools.

> *I was born there [Mexico] and came here [to the U.S.] when I was little. My parents brought me out here, so, I was raised here. I've never, if you ask me about Mexico, no. I don't know anything over there. I would be lost. So, I was raised here and have been here my whole life. My whole family is bilingual. And not only that, my family helped me but in Chicago, there were more teachers that were bilingual. So, I grew up with that. It was easier for me as a kid because I got to learn both languages at the same time. And if I needed help, there was somebody there. I guess, as a kid, I was very lucky.* (Interview 1, October 28, 2019)

Acting as Ririe's sole ESL paraprofessional was Verónica's first experience working in a school setting. For someone to serve as a non-certified paraprofessional, the state of Indiana requires that they "must either have completed two years of college, hold a two-year degree, or pass a

state or local assessment" (Indiana Department of Education, 2020). At the time of our interview, Verónica had been in the position for approximately 6 weeks, and during our frequent, informal conversations, she had mentioned to me that her new position was much different from what she had expected.

> *Honestly, so they [the hiring committee] said, an aid. To me, oh an aid, helper. I thought I was coming to help somebody that was going to stay here. But when I came, and I had the interview, and that's the day that they told me, oh no, because I even said it in the interview, I was like, 'I'm going to help, right? And they were like, oh no, you're going to be the one that takes her [Daniela's] place. And that's when I got like, oh, I thought I was going to be the helper. But no, that's when they told me, no you're the person that's going to take over and all that. I didn't mind it, because obviously, I took the job. I love the job, don't get me wrong. I love the kids and I don't mind helping them, because I'm trying to help mine [my son]. I can do it, but it's going to take time, and I hate it, I dislike the fact that I'm not going to be here all the time. I'm here, temporary. It breaks my heart, because like I'm just, they [students] get used to, they were so used to Daniela and they loved that she was here, 10 years, so it breaks my heart that she left, and now they're stuck with me. They're going to be with me, but then I'm going to leave. I'm really hoping they hire someone else just so she can be with me. Like, attach to her. When I leave, it's not going to be bad.* (Interview 1, October 28, 2019)

The Shelton County School District does not have an official ESL program. When Daniela was hired more than 10 years ago to work at Ririe Elementary, she was given the title of ESL paraprofessional because she was bilingual and worked with the school's ESL population. During the initial study, Daniela had shared with me that she had received some training throughout her years at Ririe, but that she often created her curriculum based on what she thought was best for the immigrant students. Now that Daniela was gone, I was curious if Verónica's experience was similar, so I inquired how she was adjusting to the new school environment.

> *At first, it was really hard because honestly, I just got thrown in there. It was hard because I didn't know anybody. I didn't know the people, the kids.* (Interview 1, October 28, 2019)

Verónica is the mother of a third-grade boy, and during many of our informal conversations, she would often talk about her son. While she admitted that she has no "formal" training as an educator, she was teaching her son to be bilingual. Verónica would often compare her son's educational experiences to those of the children she worked with at Ririe Elementary. I asked Verónica how that experience impacted affected her approach to teaching Ririe's bilingual population.

> *Well, honestly, I think I let them talk to me first because when I first came here and my first group, I did ask them in English. So, I guess I do go off in English. I was like, who speaks English? And the little boys and girls would say, I do. And then I noticed the ones that wouldn't even talk. And I was like, ok. But I ask them in English because sometimes we can look Hispanic and we don't even talk Spanish, like my son. They would probably be like, oh he talks Spanish but in reality, he doesn't.* (Interview 1, October 28, 2019)

A few days later, when I listened to the audio of the recorded interview, I made notes of the critical moments from my interview with Verónica.

> *I can't stop thinking about the fact that* Verónica will most likely leave at the end of this year. *There was such a void when Daniela and Emilie left, but I was hopeful when* Verónica *arrived. She seems to have a great rapport with the students and I know that so many students will be lost without a bilingual teacher/para – someone to speak to them, to care for them. At the same time, I'm not surprised. Rural areas experience high turnover and she said she was upfront with Matt and the hiring committee. She's studying to become a nurse, not a teacher. Now what?* (Personal Journal, November 1, 2019)

Overall, I appreciated my first interview with Verónica. Although our backgrounds are quite different, we share similar experiences in terms of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. At one point, during an informal conversation, when we were discussing her relationship with some of the other paraprofessionals, Verónica commented, "You get it, you're not white" (Personal communication, October 8, 2019). I remember awkwardly smiling at her, but I understood what

she meant. I am empathetic with students whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds differ from those of their teachers, or, in Verónica's case, from those of her colleagues.

Leaning In

The relationship that a researcher enters into a participant requires a tremendous amount of time, patience, and negotiation. Through formal and informal conversations, I focused my efforts on connecting with each of my participants, as individuals with unique perspectives on both Ririe Elementary School and the community. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000):

> To join the narrative, to become part of the landscape, the researcher needs to be there long enough and be a sensitive reader of and questioner of situations to grasp the huge number of events and stories, the many twisting and turning narrative threads that pulse through every moment and show up in what appears to the new and inexperienced eyes of the researcher as mysterious code. (p. 77)

Early on in this inquiry, as I found myself listening to the audio of the recorded interviews, I became fascinated with the pauses, the subtle laughs, the choice of words spoken. Once I had transcribed each of the interviews, I read and reread my field texts, making notes in the margins. Each time, as I leaned into the *tellings* of my participants' experiences, I was surprised by something that was said, and, in some instances, some things that were left out.

In this chapter, I focused on transcribed data from Interview 1 as a way of giving you, the reader, an initial impression of who each of my participants revealed themselves to be, in their own words. But as humans, we are not made up of one thing—we grow, transform. In subsequent chapters, as both formal and informal conversations continued, you, the reader, will come to discover a more nuanced understanding of how participants' experiences influenced their pedagogical practices with Latinx immigrant students in the classroom. Specifically, in the next chapter, I make meaning of the complicated and intricate transition from the *livings* of being in

the field (i.e., classroom observations and informal conversations) to *relivings*, which take the form of classroom narratives.

CHAPTER FOUR. COME ON. YOU NEED TO BE TRYING

In Chapter Three, I illuminated my experiences of becoming a narrative inquirer. Initially, "walking in the midst" (Phillion, 2002) of this fluid, three-dimensional inquiry space meant navigating entry into the field and establishing rapport with rural educators, a process I shared in the form of participant profiles. These *tellings* brought you, the reader, up close as I entered into negotiated relationships with Linda, Matt, Jessica, and Verónica. However, staying true to narrative form, as you continue to journey with me, delving deeper into this narrative inquiry, certain characters will become more prominent, while others fade into the landscape.

A narrative inquiry is a story of relationships. Beginning in the fall of 2019 and concluding in March of 2020, just 2 weeks before the COVID-19 pandemic forced PK–12 schools to shift from in-person to online instruction, I began my classroom observations with Linda, Jessica, and Verónica. For nearly 8 months, I averaged work for 20 hours per week, observing my participants' interactions with Latinx immigrant students. In the early days of my classroom observations, I tried to remain neutral and blend into the background, feverishly jotting down notes on my yellow notepad, but anyone who has spent a significant amount of time in an elementary school is fully aware that these things are not possible. As I immersed myself in this inquiry, I became deeply connected to each classroom space and the people who that occupied it.

Being in the field was a mixture of excitement and trepidation, and I relied heavily on my past experiences as a 6th–12th grade teacher to guide my curiosity as a researcher. Navigating this in-between, teacher-researcher space meant *leaning in*, which began by learning the classroom routines and management styles of each participant. *Leaning in* meant reviewing second- and third-grade mathematics and English language arts standards, as well as becoming

knowledgeable regarding the curricula. *Leaning in* meant intense observation—listening and watching, recording notes in my field journals, and reflecting. As I focused on the interactions between my participants and their Latinx immigrant students, I began to make meaning of these experiences, which included examining the tensions that emerged from the emotional work often required to conduct educational research.

In this chapter, I invite you to immerse yourself in experience, as I embrace my role as an emerging qualitative researcher. Born out of field notes, the following classroom narratives illuminate significant moments from my time spent observing each participant working with Latinx immigrant students. As a way of entering each participant's classroom, I have structured this experience into four short narratives. It is important to note that each of these narratives, which take the form of *retellings*, stands on their own, emerging from hours of recorded field notes and researcher journals. As you enter these classrooms, I wonder how you will imagine yourself within each story—as a second and/or third grader, a classroom teacher, or a researcher.

Linda Welch's Third-Grade Classroom

"Can you tell me those words?"[9]

Day 1

10:30 a.m.: Like clockwork, the paraprofessionals file into the third-grade classroom; four white women between the ages of 40 and 60. "Joey, Rachael, Sarah, Rob. You go with Mrs. Harris," Linda says, in a calm voice. The four students push in their blue chairs, grab their reading books, and make their way toward the classroom entryway. Built in the 1960s, Ririe Elementary has an open-concept floor plan. While the outer walls, constructed of cinder block,

[9] The narrative, *Can you tell me those words?* was previously published in the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education.* A complete citation may be found under References.

are painted a pale bone white, the interior 'walls' are made of oversized metal cabinets (black, tan, and gray) that divide the rooms into different grade levels. Sound travels easily from classroom to classroom; therefore, Linda is constantly "shushing" students. "Troy, Mary, and Johnny. You go with Mrs. Cripe." It's early September, yet Linda is already focused on the state testing that will take place in the spring. The mornings are dedicated to language arts, while the afternoons are focused on math. Each day, Linda's third-grade class is divided into five smaller groups, which spend 30 minutes in reading groups. I glance at the clock. It's 10:32 a.m., and I wonder why Linda hasn't made up the groups ahead of time. As Linda reads the remaining names ("Hector, Cameron, Elena, Julieta, Mike, and Addy. You're in my group."). I quickly scan the room, wondering where I should sit to observe Linda's group. From the beginning, I have been granted full access to Linda's classroom, but I worry that I might be a distraction to her students. Every morning, I am greeted with hugs from Elena and Julieta, who remember me from the previous year when I visited their second-grade classroom. On this morning, Elena and I were talking about McAllen, Texas, when Linda walked toward us and told Elena to leave. While I try to make a very small footprint in her classroom, I wonder if Linda is angry with me for speaking with Elena. Each morning, as the third graders enter the classroom, they are expected to follow the directions that are displayed on the whiteboard. ("Unpack. Lunch. Bathroom. Morning Work"). Linda repeats these directions several times before the first bell rings at 8:15 a.m. I gather my yellow notepad, two pens, and make my way toward an empty desk near the back of the room. As I sit down, I notice a blue poster prominently displayed above Linda's desk. In yellow letters the motivational quote reads, "At school or at home and all day through, it's good to remember you are responsible for you!" Linda and her students are sitting at a rectangular table toward the back of the classroom. Glancing at the clock, Linda says, "Open

your books to page 114" and directs each, beginning with Cameron, to take turns reading one paragraph at a time. Linda's reading group consists of three immigrant students and three white students. Elena and Julieta, both born in Mexico, are bilingual and have been at Ririe since kindergarten. Hector is new to third grade. He emigrated to the United States from Honduras with his father over the summer, is undocumented, and is an emerging ELL[10] student. As the students flip through the pages of their book looking for page 114, I remember that Christopher is absent today and search for his reading book, which is hidden beneath a stack of colorful folders in his desk. I find it encouraging that for today's lesson, Linda's students will be reading and discussing a Spanish/English short story about two cousins from Mexico and the United States called *Dear Primo: A Letter to My Cousin,* by Duncan Tonatiuh, and I wonder if Linda has specifically chosen this story to be more inclusive of her Spanish-speaking students. As I quickly find the story, I am surprised that Linda hasn't previewed the list of vocabulary words or given a brief synopsis of the story. I make note to ask her how she prepares students and paraprofessionals for each lesson. As Cameron finishes the first paragraph, Mike turns the page and begins to read, "My family grows many things, such as…," stopping when he reaches the word *maiz.* Continuing, Cameron reads, "We have a…," and stops again. Glancing at each other, Mike and Cameron begin laughing. Quickly "shushing" the boys, Linda says, "When you come across another language, try to make a guess at it." Then, turning to Elena, Linda points to the sentence that says, "We have a *burro, pollos,* and a *gallo*. Every morning the *gallo* 'crows and crows,' and asks, "How do we say that?" referring to the 'll-' sound in *pollos* and *gallo.* Looking slightly embarrassed, Elena smiles and says, *pollos* correctly. Now it's Elena's turn to read. As Elena begins to read the next paragraph, Linda listens quietly, interrupting once to correct

[10] Throughout this narrative inquiry, I use the term emerging English Language Learner (ELL) to differentiate between the two groups of Latinx immigrant students at Ririe Elementary School.

Elena's pronunciation of skyscraper. On the next page, the story is split into two scenes: At the bottom of the page is a picture of a New York City subway train, and at the top of the page is a picture of a little boy bicycling next to a stone wall in Mexico. As Julieta begins reading, Hector points to the page and says, "Trump" several times. As I look up from the story, I realize that no one at the table has acknowledged Hector's comments. As Julieta comes to the end of the paragraph, she looks at Hector, who is next in line to read. After a long pause, Linda says, "That's OK. Go on," and instructs Cameron to continue reading. As I quickly continue to jot down every interaction, every spoken word, I notice Julieta guiding Hector's finger to the sentences about recess. At 10:57 a.m., I hear voices in the hallway; Linda's other students are returning from their groups, signifying the end of the lesson. As I gather my belongings, I make note that Hector was passed over twice during the reading group. A few minutes later, as students begin to line up for recess, I make my way toward the back of the line when Joey, a white boy, asks me how to say "You're welcome" in Spanish. As I reply, "De nada," Linda overhears the brief conversation and says, "Joey, are you learning some Spanish?"

Day 2

It's 10:23 a.m. On the whiteboard, Linda has written, "Finish reading story. Do pg. 145 in book." She reminds her students that yesterday they learned the Spanish words in the story. Rob, a white boy, responds out loud, "I forgot them all," to which Linda replies, "When you come across a Spanish word in italics, say '*blank'* or skip it." This morning, Linda has a meeting with the principal, and a few minutes before the paraprofessionals arrive, she begins assigning students to their respective groups. "Rachel, Jackson, Hunter, Mary, April, Hector. You go with Mrs. Harris." At 10:30 a.m., four white women arrive to pickup their students. I decide to follow Hector because I am curious about how he will do in this new group. Next to Linda's classroom

is an area designated for the paraprofessionals to work with students in small groups. As Mrs. Harris and the students settle in at a round table, I find an empty chair a few feet away. The room, nicknamed (Para)dise, is much smaller than Linda's classroom, dimly lit, and lined with gray cabinets that tower over the students. As I wait for Mrs. Harris to begin, I find the space to be the opposite of paradise, and I wonder if students feel comfortable reading and discussing fiction and nonfiction in this environment. I am surprised when instead of asking the students where they left off, Mrs. Harris begins the story over from the beginning, reading aloud to the group. As she comes across the first few words in Spanish, *maíz*, *burro*, *gallo*, and *pollos*, Mrs. Harris laughs to herself and stumbles over the pronunciations. As the story continues, she comes across more challenging words, such as *trompo*, *canicas*, and *papalote*, but, as time goes by, she begins to skip the Spanish words. Her frustration is becoming apparent to the group as she says aloud, "I'm not even going to try to pronounce this." The last few pages of the story address the various holidays celebrated between the two characters. "In Mexico, we have so many traditions, such as the [*Día de los Muertos*, the Day of the Dead]," but she stops mid-sentence when she comes to the Spanish. "You jump in and say those words." As I look up, I realize that she is pointing to Hector. He looks to his classmates, but none of them are Spanish speakers. Mrs. Harris points to Hector and then points to the words on the page. "Can you tell me those words?" Hector says aloud, "Día de los Muertos," and Mrs. Harris laughs. Out loud and to herself, she says, "How are the kids supposed to pronounce this?"

"I have no idea."

"Somebody's talking," Linda says to the class. It's 8:10 a.m., and the morning work is posted on the whiteboard: Illustrate spelling words. On each of their desks, students have a blank piece of white paper and a list of eight spelling words. "Fold your paper in half. Then, fold your

paper in half. And then again." As Linda outlines the directions orally, she makes her way toward the whiteboard and illustrates the first vocabulary word: *splash*. Then she writes it in cursive: *splash, splash, splash*.

As the students quietly work, Linda takes attendance and checks the lunch count, calling out the names of students who still need to make a lunch selection. Walking around the classroom, she repeats the directions orally again. As she walks past Hector, I notice that his neighbor, Joey, is helping him fold his paper. At 8:28 a.m., Linda directs students to "finish up." Desperately wanting to stretch my legs and curious about morning work, I walk around the room, noticing that most students have completed the tasks for four vocabulary words. Making my way past Hector, who is slumped over in his chair, his arms covering his head and knees, I observe that he has only illustrated the sample word, *splash*. At 8:30 a.m., Linda turns on the projector and pulls up the principal's daily announcements on YouTube. As she waits for the students to "get quiet," Linda walks over to Hector, whose head is still on his desk. Pointing to his morning work, Linda says, "Hector, put it away" but he never lifts his head. Linda then asks Margaret to tell Hector to put his work away and pay attention. He won't lift his head. Julieta then walks over to Hector and shoves his paper in his desk. Hector doesn't move an inch. Finally, the girls sit down, and Linda plays the morning announcements. Just then, Ms. Maples, the Special Education paraprofessional, walks in, glancing at Hector and then at Linda. Shaking her head, Linda says aloud, "I have no idea. The girls tried talking to him."

Each day, after morning work and the principal's announcements, the students gather for Community Circle. Today's prompt is *Perseverance: Think about a time when you displayed this trait*. The rules are simple. Students gather at the back of the room, sit on the floor pretzel style, and take turns answering the prompt. The speaker, who is holding a blue stuffed bear, is the only

person allowed to speak. As the students make their way to join the circle, Thaddeus, an African American boy, sits down next to Hector. I have watched the two boys play together on the playground and I assume they are friends. As Linda hands the bear to a female student, Thaddeus begins making loud noises and is told to find another spot in the circle, away from Hector. As the bear passes from student to student, I record their responses to the prompt. “Trying to ride a bike.” “Studying for spelling.” “Tying shoes.” “Learning cursive.” After each response, Linda kindly says, “Thank you.” Four students are left to speak. Thaddeus begins to repeat “Um” loudly until Linda calmly tells him to return to his desk. When the bear makes its way to Hector, Linda asks Elena if she could translate for him. Hector, shrugging his shoulders and looking confused by the question, remains silent, when loudly Thaddeus responds for him, “Learning how to speak because you’re a baby!” A few students laugh, as Linda “shushes” the class and directs them to return to their seats.

Linda keeps her students on a consistent schedule. After Community Circle, she designates 30 minutes for independent reading. Once students complete a book, they are directed to take an AR (Accelerated Reading) test on their Chromebooks. Near the back of the classroom is a set of bookcases. Students self-select a book, find a spot to read (usually on the floor) and begin reading quietly. As Linda makes her way around the classroom, making sure that students are on task, I notice that Hector is the only student on his Chromebook with a set of headphones on. “Get a book and sit down,” Linda says to a student who is throwing books near the back of the room. She then makes her way toward her desk and begins working on her computer. Ten minutes pass before Hector gets up from his desk and walks over to Julieta. Linda gets up from her desk and says, “I told him to do the next one.” As Julieta directs Hector toward the next online activity, Linda walks around the room before returning to her desk. I’m curious to know

what Hector is working on, so I casually make my way over to his desk. Hector is working on a language arts program that displays pictures, with a corresponding word in English (e.g., *apple, walking, one, four*). After completing the lesson, Hector says, "Julieta," and waves her over to his desk. I can't help but smile as Julieta "high fives" Hector and reports to Linda on his progress. "Does it seem to be helping him?" Linda asks Julieta. At 9:31 a.m., Linda says to the class, "Close Chromebooks." As laptops begin to snap closed, she announces, "I can still see three Chromebooks open." As I scan the room, Hector, who is still wearing his headphones, is on his computer. "Hector. It's time to stop," but Hector doesn't appear to hear his name and continues clicking on the program. "Stop. Stop. Stop!" Linda loudly repeats. At this point, all eyes are on Hector when Victoria, a Hispanic girl who sits a few desks away, walks over and closes Hector's computer. Click!

"It's just one test."

"I got an F!" Rob announces to the class. Linda is passing back a graded language arts exam from last week. "You're not taking enough time. You will see this on iRead. It's 1 month away." As Linda continues to pass back their exams, the room is filled with mixed emotions; some students are laughing, some are confused, and one little girl is crying. "Lucía, turn around. I'm not listening to comments. Focus." As Linda begins going over the correct answers, I notice that Lucía, the daughter of immigrant parents from the Dominican Republic, has left her desk and is crawling to the back of the room, making her way toward Elena, who is visibly upset. "Number 5—almost all of you missed the easiest question on the test." Sitting directly behind Elena, I can see her tears plopping onto her exam. As Lucía continues to crawl toward Elena, she is aided by Mary, a white girl, who warns her to "duck" so that Linda can't see her. "I'm concerned because this is what you'll see on your big test. We'll be doing this 2–3 times per

week between now and March." When Lucía reaches Elena, she hugs her friend. Kneeling down, holding Elena's hand, Lucía continues to comfort Elena, whose face is bright red from sobbing. As I sit helplessly, Linda looks up from her paper and says, "Lucía, what are you doing? Go back to your desk." As Lucía makes her way toward her desk, Mary shakes her head in disgust. For the remainder of the lesson, Linda goes over the correct responses. At 10:28 a.m., as students transition into their reading groups, Elena walks over to me, and I give her a hug. This hug causes a chain reaction of hugs from her friends, first by Lucía and then by Julieta. Noticing that the girls are out of their seats and standing next to me, Linda asks Elena, "Are you sick?" As Elena shakes her head "no," Lucía informs Linda that her friend is crying because of the "F" she received on her exam. "It's just one test." Linda replies. "In China, they take a test every week."

"Ándale, ándale"[11]

Today is picture day. Linda's third-grade class is dressed up for picture day. Several girls walk up to me and show off their new outfits. Following individual photographs of each student, the entire school will assemble into the gym for a group photograph. The students are actively buzzing about the room. As Linda begins to line up her class in alphabetical order, I notice that Hector quickly hurries to the back of the line. As I watch Hector, I wonder if he was aware that today was picture day. Because Hector is the only emerging ELL student in her class, Linda relies on a group of bilingual girls to communicate with him about the various activities and lessons that go on in school. Elena makes her way to Hector and begins speaking in Spanish. Although my Spanish is limited, based on the conversation between Elena and Hector, I make out the word "foto." After a brief exchange, Elena and Hector approach Linda as she began

[11] The narrative, *Ándale, ándale,* was previously published in the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. A complete citation may be found under References.

walking the class toward the gym. Gabriella tells Linda that Hector does not want to go, and Linda bluntly states that everyone is going to have their picture taken. As Linda and the class walk toward the gym, Hector, Elena, and I remain in the hallway. Suddenly, I glance down the hall toward a paraprofessional and the administrative assistant, and both women walk in our direction. The two white women do not acknowledge my presence as they tell both children to head to the gym. Hector turns and begins to walk back toward the classroom briskly. The administrative assistant starts shouting "Ándale, ándale!" at both children. Grabbing Hector's arm, Elena begins dragging him down the hallway. For what feels like an eternity, down the hall, Hector repeatedly says, "No, no, no!"

Jessica Reed's Second-Grade Classroom

The Boy in the Blue Box[12]

The physical layout of Jessica's second-grade classroom doesn't surprise me. In colorful plastic tubs, stacks of books sorted by reading levels line the row of bookshelves. Curious about the types of texts that a second grader might read, I thumb through a pile of *Scholastic: Easy Reader Biographies* and make note of the featured U.S. figures. (e.g., Rosa Parks, Cesar Chavez, Betsy Ross, Squanto, Abraham Lincoln) Posters with inspirational messages, such as, "Mistakes happen, and it is okay" and "We believe everyone deserves respect" bring much needed brightness to the off-white cinderblock walls. Just above a brown chalkboard is a border of the alphabet in cursive and several posters on adverbs and adjectives. The flag of the United States, displayed in the corner, is mounted above the laptop cart, and, in the center of the ceiling is a white projector that faces a large whiteboard near the front of the room. As I scan the room, I

[12] The narrative, *The Boy in the Blue Box*, was previously published in the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. A complete citation may be found under References.

make note of the students' desks, which are arranged in straight rows, all facing the teacher's desk. The students are expected to remain in their seats, unless instructed otherwise. The only exception to these straight rows is one lone desk at the back of the room. It's my first day of observing second grade, and I sit at a back table near the coat hooks. Although I am within a few feet of the inhabitant of the lone desk, the little boy seems oblivious to my presence. As the students begin their morning work, the little boy sits under his desk. By midmorning, he tires of sitting and chooses to lie under his chair. While he remains quiet, he never appears to be working on the tasks at hand. While his classmates have their reading books open during language arts or are working on math on their Chromebooks, the top of his desk remains empty. As I observe this little boy, lying on his back, pushing the chair above him, I worry that he will accidentally hurt himself with the metal chair legs. In this moment, I am struggling to decide whether to say something to Jessica when a paraprofessional enters the room. Glancing over at the little boy, the paraprofessional continues to walk on by. My initial hunch is that this student's isolation from his peers is due to behavior issues, and my subsequent conversation with Jessica confirmed my suspicions. Again, I'm not surprised by this. According to Jessica, Leo had been held back in first grade twice, and his parents had not completed the necessary paperwork to have their son tested. Jessica later tells me that Leo is not ready to move on to third grade. From what I observed, Leo spends most of his days under his desk, and if he is quiet, Jessica and the paraprofessionals were content.

On the second day of my classroom observations, Leo notices that one of his classmates has accidentally knocked down a toy stuffed chicken that sits on the chalkboard ledge near the pencil-sharpening table. Leo immediately gets up and begins walking toward the chicken. Within what seems like a few seconds, Jessica says, "Leo, you're not in your box," and Leo turns

around, back toward his desk. This is when I realize that there is blue tape in the shape of a square surrounding his desk.

For the entire fall semester, Leo remains in the blue box. His classmates are not allowed to speak to him. In late October, the music teacher joins the second-grade class for an activity, part of a school-wide social-emotional initiative. As Miss Ryan enters the classroom, Leo motions for her to come over and sit by him. Looking at me, she laughs and says, “He’s obsessed. I make him earn my friendship because he acts like a turd most of the time.” As Leo attempts to get her attention, she appears to take pleasure in ‘messing’ with him, and I feel my blood begin to boil.

Water Rolls, Water Rises/~~El Agua Rueda, El Agua Sube~~

Last spring, I observed Jessica’s classroom a handful of times, but now for my dissertation, I plan to spend 1 to 2 days conducting classroom observations each week. At first glance, the classroom looks the same, even though Jessica’s life is about to change forever. Jessica, pregnant with her first child, is currently in her third trimester. In August, we negotiated when classroom observations and interviews would take place; September through November will be dedicated to observations before she goes on maternity leave, and observations will pick back up in February. Interviews will take place at Jessica’s home while she is on maternity leave. One obvious difference from last spring is that Jessica spends a lot of time at her desk. As I set up my observation location at the back of the room, she greets students as they walk in. On the whiteboard, the morning schedule is posted:

Good morning

1. Unpack your bookbag
2. Lunch choice

3. Sharpen all pencils
4. Bathroom
5. iRead
6. Read for AR

One by one, sleepy students enter the room and make their way toward the large table where I am currently sitting. Just behind me is a row of coat hooks, and I marvel at the colorful backpacks (e.g., unicorns, tie-dye, sequins) as students unpack. Unlike many of the current third graders, who remembered me from the spring, I am a stranger to these second graders. My smiling face is met with blank stares, and, to get out of their way, I quickly throw my notepad and pens into my bag, grab my coffee, and walk toward the bookshelves. At first, the room looks the same as last year, minus an updated 2019 calendar. Jessica, whose desk is a few feet away from me, notices me staring at the calendar and remarks, "It's only taken me 22 days to be able to communicate with the ELL students." Confused by her statement, I take a closer look at the calendar, then at the clock. The signs that used to read *el calendario* and *el reloj* are missing. Walking the perimeter of the room, I realize that all of the signs have been removed: *septiembre, la puerta, la pizarra, toallas de papel*. Where did they go?

Of the 22 second-graders at Ririe Elementary, four of the 12 Hispanic students are emerging ELL students. Last year, when Mrs. Cole, the principal, gave me a guided tour of the school, she pointed out the signage in Spanish; It was her hope that non-Spanish speakers would take the opportunity to learn new vocabulary. As I walked back to my designated "spot," I make a note to check the third-grade classroom during my next observations. Hopefully, the signs in Spanish are still in that classroom.

After announcements, Jessica dedicates the morning to language arts. Turning on the overhead projector, she displays an audiobook titled *Water Rolls, Water Rises* by Pat Mora. While she quiets the class down, I quickly Google the book title to familiarize myself with the text. Published in 2014, *Water Rolls, Water Rises: El Agua Rueda, El Agua Sube*[13]is a poem that beautifully illustrates the natural world through descriptions of water. I'm intrigued by the Spanish-English text, and I wonder how Jessica will introduce this poem to all of her students. The lesson begins with an audio introduction of the author, Pat Mora, and stresses the fact that Ms. Mora writes in both Spanish and English. After the introduction, the story begins. Jessica stops the audio recording several times to point out vocabulary words that are highlighted in yellow (e.g., *strokes, tumbling, plumes*). The poem, which takes nearly 5 minutes to read aloud, displays majestic scenes of the Grand Canal of Venice, the Sahara in Morocco, and the Andes of Chile. At the end of the poem, Jessica asks the class what the poem was about. Raising his hand, Enrique replies, "It's about waterfalls." At this point, I remember that second graders have very short attention spans. As students begin to chat with their classmates, Jessica loudly says to two bilingual students, "Mateo. Sal. You don't seem to be paying attention. You will stay in at recess and move your desks." Liliana, an emerging ELL student, lays her head down on her desk. "Lift your head up, Sweet Pea." As I feverishly take notes, I quickly realize that the poem was narrated in English. On my notepad, I write, "Where is the Spanish?"

Lost: In Translation

I have been hoping to find some time to speak with Jessica about her students, so I appreciate the fact that she arrives at the school 30-45 minutes before the first bell rings at 8:00

[13] See References for the citation of the original publication of *Water Rolls, Water Rises: El agua rueda, el agua sube* by Pat Mora.

a.m. At 7:45 a.m., I arrive at Ririe Elementary, and, as I unpack my bag for today's observation, Jessica and I engage in an informal conversation about her immigrant students. Specifically, I am curious about how she communicates with her four emerging ELL students: Liliana, Esteban, Marcos, and Inès. During my first few visits, Jessica would use Google Translate on her cell phone to communicate with her students, but nearly 1 month into the school year, her use of technology has become less frequent. Jessica shares with me that she often wonders what languages her students speak. She uses the term "selective understanding" to describe her emerging ELL students; she implies that some of her students are "faking" how much English they know. Although our conversation is brief, I am left with a feeling of dread.

At 8:50 a.m., Mrs. Maples, a Special Education paraprofessional, enters the room. Four white students, two boys and two girls, grab a nonfiction book and meet Mrs. Maples at a round table. Jessica, sitting at another round table near her desk, calls out the names of six students: one white boy, one Hispanic girl, and four Hispanic boys. The remaining students are left on their own to read in small groups that have been pre-assigned by Jessica. As I scan the room, I notice Esteban, an emerging ELL student from Mexico, who is sitting with two white girls and one Hispanic boy. The lesson hasn't even begun when Jessica says, "Esteban. We're not talking. You can stay in from recess. If you have a question, ask. We can get the computer to translate but talking between the two of you is NOT OK. Do you have a question?" Esteban shakes his head and lays it down on the table. I'm confused by the students Jessica has selected for her group. Why isn't Esteban with her and the other emerging ELL students?

In Jessica's group, she asks Marcos if he knows what a *reservoir* is. As Marcos looks at Jessica, she asks, "Do you understand?" He nods his head. Turning to the group, Jessica says, "Like a lake." Jessica's focus is split as she attempts to work with her group while also keeping a

close watch on the groups that are independently reading. Speaking directly to two Hispanic boys in her group, Jessica abruptly says, “Come on. You need to be trying. You’re on the wrong page.” As Marcos looks confused and turns to his classmates, Jessica directs one of the bilingual students in the group to translate for him. Clearly frustrated, Jessica pulls her cellphone from her sweater pocket and begins to translate the directions. “OK. Right here,” She points to the page. “With this app, I can call home. It will translate. Do you understand? Do you understand? Pencils on mesa.” As Jessica threatens Marcos with a phone call home, again, she looks over at Esteban’s group and says to him, “Go back to your seat. You are talking, not learning.” However, Esteban remains with his reading group. Turning her attention back to Marcos, Jessica states, “It’s one question. That’s all I’m asking.” Again, Jessica begins typing on her phone to translate. “Did you understand the story we read? Please write one question.” Then, turning to Liliana, an emerging ELL student from Mexico, Jessica says, “Do you understand the story we read? *Si*, or no? You can write it in Spanish or English.” By the end of the lesson, Liliana’s and Marcos’s papers are blank.

As students return to their seats, I notice that instead of going back to his desk, Marcos walks over to Esteban and the boys begin talking to each other. Jessica must have noticed too, because she loudly states, “Marcos, if you have a question, don’t go over to that table—ask me.”

It’s 9:31 a.m. in Jessica’s classroom, and Miss Verónica Salinas, the new English as a Second Language (ESL) paraprofessional, has just entered the room to pick up the four emerging ELL students. Although this is Verónica’s first week at Ririe Elementary, Liliana and Inès run to her and give her hugs. The brief exchange between Jessica and Verónica was quite telling. “They were naughty, even when the directions were translated for them,” says Jessica, to which Verónica replies, “I will talk to them.”

Sore Feet

It is 8:00 a.m., Inès, a girl from Honduras, enters the classroom sobbing. As Inès stands near the coat hooks, Jessica grabs some brown paper towels from the dispenser and wipes her eyes. “Breakfast. Go unpack.” Jessica says. Inès leaves her backpack on top of the table at which I sit and makes her way toward her desk. As the students begin their morning work, Inès lays her head on her desk while quietly crying. At 8:20 a.m., the woman in charge of lunches walks into the classroom to collects the lunch count. Inès has not marked her lunch. To the class, the lunch worker announces, “Who can speak for her?” Alex, a bilingual student, walks over to Inès, taps her on the shoulder, and asks, “*Espaguetis* or corndog?” Shrugging her shoulders, Inès lays her head back down on her desk. “She’s had a rough morning,” Jessica proclaims, and the lunch worker leaves the room.

On this morning, the second graders will begin PIVOT testing as preparation for the ISTEP+ exams in the spring. PIVOT INSPECT® is an Indiana Formative Benchmark Assessment which collects K–12 student data and assesses student performance thrice a year in language arts and math. All of the directions are in English, so Jessica calls her emerging ELL students up to her desk. Inès, who is wearing pink, sparkly jelly sandals, appears to be limping as she approaches Jessica. Point to Inès’s feet, Jessica gives a quick inspection and then uses her phone to translate the directions in Spanish for the four students. The rest of the students are quietly on their Chromebooks, completing the PIVOT assessment. Nearly 6 minutes after Jessica translated the directions for her immigrant students, Inès returns to Jessica’s desk with her Chromebook. “Why did you submit?” Jessica says, and then points to the main office. Inès, who appears confused, seeks out a fellow student, Sarah, a bilingual student, and Sarah walks Inès to the nurse’s office. The next 10 minutes feel like utter confusion. Halfway through the test, Jessica realizes that her students needed to use a pair of headphones to take the test. She is

clearly frustrated because while Liliana and Esteban did not understand the directions, once they clicked through the assessment, they put their heads on their desks. Marcos, who also submitted his test, is called out by Jessica for not answering all the questions. Inès returns from the office. Limping up to Jessica's desk, she says, "bathroom," to which Jessica replies, "You just went half an hour ago." Request denied. As Inès limps back to her desk, she lays her head on her desk. Half an hour later, as students are silently reading, Jessica calls out Inès in front of the entire class, saying, "I'm going to call home and tell them how bad you've been. That you don't care."

Verónica Salinas' Para(dise) Classroom

Verónica's First Day of School

Six weeks into the 2019–2020 school year, Verónica begins her new position as a part-time ESL paraprofessional. She appears to be nervous. On a wooden clipboard, she has attached a handwritten weekly schedule, with lists of which classrooms to visit and which to pull out of class. She tells me that her only qualification is that she speaks Spanish, but that she loves kids. She has received exactly 1 day of training from Daniela, the outgoing ESL paraprofessional. I smile and thank her for allowing me to observe her throughout the day. I am grateful that she has taken the position and secretly hope that she stays for at least a year. For the past month and a half, the emerging ELL students of Ririe have been struggling. Daniela's absence is felt throughout the school by both the teachers and the immigrant students.

At 9:35 a.m., I walk with Verónica over to the second-grade classroom. She picks up a total of six children: three bilingual students and three emerging ELL students. As the students quietly line up, she looks toward Jessica, waiting for instructions, but receives none. Verónica walks the students to Para(dise), which is a large room nestled in between the second- and third-

grade classrooms. The room holds three large desks for the paraprofessionals to share and five small tables and chairs for students to work at. As students pull out the blue Wobble chairs that are tucked under a crescent moon table, I'm surprised when Verónica says to the students, "What do we do?" in English.

At a metal bookshelf, behind her desk, Verónica pulls out a clear plastic tub of Spanish/English books. Grabbing the first book she sees, Verónica begins to read. *¡Es la Hora de los Esqueletos!/It's Skeleton Time!* While simultaneously listening to the story, I jot down in my notes, "Who makes the curricular decisions with regards to ESL students?" and "What is the relationship between the paraprofessionals and teachers?" Then I hear laughter. Liliana, a second grader, who always appeared to be quite shy, often with her head down on her desk, is acting out some of the scenes from the book. I'm surprised by the students' overall demeanor; they are smiling, talkative and laughing. Verónica reads the first two pages and then gives each student a chance to read in Spanish and English. She is patient when John struggles to pronounce "esqueletos" and when the students who have been labeled "Spanish only" help another boy, Rudy, who appears embarrassed because he doesn't speak Spanish. Verónica encourages him to try and shares with them that her son doesn't speak Spanish. As a non-Spanish speaker, I enjoy the beauty of the dialogue. The student-teacher interaction is seamless and natural. The atmosphere isn't regimented. Verónica is kind, reassuring, and supportive. At the conclusion of the story, Verónica, speaks to the students in both English and Spanish, asks questions about the story to check for comprehension. Verónica reads one more book, *The Three Little Pigs/Los Tres Cerditos* before 9:56 a.m., when she lines the students up to return to second grade. In Spanish, Verónica is chatting with the students as they walk back to the classroom. I am shocked; the students appear to be instantly comfortable with Verónica. As she leaves her students and walks

back to Para(dise), she whispers to me, “They don’t want to return to their classroom.” In my notepad, I write, “This is Verónica’s first day!”

Missed Opportunity

It is nearly 2 months into the school year and Verónica appears to be settling into a routine. Each day, from 10:30 a.m. until 11:00 a.m., she meets with Linda’s third-grade students for Literacy group, Hector, Elena, Julieta, Lucía, and Margaret, in the Para(dise) room. The routine is always the same. On day 1, the students are divided into small groups and assigned a story out of their Houghton Mifflin Harcourt reading book. On day 2, they answer open-ended questions and record their responses in their reading book. For the past month, the third graders have been working through Module 3 (“Let Freedom Ring!”), which focuses on U.S. History. During my observations, I have learned that the paraprofessionals who work with Jessica (second grade) and Linda (third grade) receive the assignments only minutes before they are to work with the students and have no time to prepare. Often, the paraprofessionals rely on the students for guidance. On this morning, Verónica appears rushed. Normally, she “checks in” with the students, conversing in Spanish about their weekend activities and families, but today, Verónica is all business. Yesterday, they read the story *The U.S. Constitution* by Norman Pearl, which discusses the three branches of the U.S. government. As the students find their seats and open their books, Verónica begins by reading question 1 aloud. “Review page 235. Why is James Madison called the ‘Father of the Constitution’?” As the girls begin flipping back through the story in search of the answer, I notice that Hector is closely watching his classmates. Checking to make sure Hector is on the correct page, Verónica waits patiently as the girls agree on an answer. Grabbing a blue, dry-erase marker, Verónica writes their response down on the white table. As Hector quietly copies down the sentence, Verónica translates for him. The next question asks

them to “Reread pages 237–238. What makes the ‘balance of power’ a good idea for the U.S. government?” There are five paragraphs that need to be read, and Julieta volunteers to read first. As the girls take turns reading aloud, Hector is passed over, and Lucía volunteers to read the final paragraph. Once again, the girls begin searching for the answer to question 2. As the girls talk among themselves, Verónica begins speaking to Hector. I’m not sure if she is providing a summary of the story to him, and I make a note to ask her later. Just then Margaret interrupts: “What is a government? Is a government mean?” Without looking up, Verónica replies in Spanish, but I am unaware of what she has said. Sometimes, Verónica translates for me, but today, she is bound by the clock. “I need to open my eyes,” Margaret replies as she stretches her arms. Relying on my limited Spanish, I listen carefully and observe closely. Just as Hector relies on visual clues to make sense of his surroundings, I do the same, and I deduce that Verónica has asked Lucía if she has found the answer to “número dos.” As Lucía replies in English, Verónica continues to write down the answers on the table. Verónica’s attention and time are split between Hector and the girls, yet the overall mood of the group is energetic. I enjoy listening to the girls flow between Spanish and English as they work together to answer the remaining questions. Everyone is on task, working to complete the assignment, and I cannot help but feel hopeful when Margaret says to Verónica, “It is kind of frustrating when Spanish-speaking people are here because you have to explain it and Hector ruins it.” In that moment, my heart sinks. Verónica’s response of, “I’m explaining it to him,” feels like a missed opportunity. Do the students see that there is value in being multilingual?

“You shouldn’t have.”

“Good morning. How was your weekend?” I ask Verónica as she enters Para(dise). We briefly chat about her nursing classes and son as she checks her email. Then, whispering,

Verónica says, “I wasn’t asked to go on the second/third-grade field trip on Friday. I wonder who translated for my kids. The principal never said a word to me.” I give her a sympathetic look and she turns to pick up the second graders.

Today, Verónica is working with Liliana and Esteban on their PIVOT test. Before she begins, Verónica tells me that she has never worked with PIVOT before. As Liliana and Esteban open their Chromebooks to take the English/language arts test, Verónica is translating the questions for them in Spanish. After 25 minutes, she walks the students back to the second-grade classroom and gives an update to Jessica. “You shouldn’t have read to them. I’m deleting their scores,” Jessica announces to the entire room. In that moment, I feel for Verónica. “Trust me, it’s not fair, but for iLearn…,” Jessica trails off midsentence. As Verónica turns to leave to pick up her next group of students, she simply states, “It’s going to be difficult for them.” Hanging her head, she is clearly upset.

“It’s necessary.”

It’s midmorning. As I sit in Linda’s third-grade classroom, I patiently wait for Verónica to pick up Hector. I’m surprised when I see Verónica arrive. Inès and Marcos, two emerging ELL students, are with her. As I follow Verónica and her students, I hear Linda say to Michelle, a white girl, “A lot of our future is determined by our performance in schools.” I quickly figure out why Verónica has chosen to work with all three students. She tells me that she gives Inès, Marcos, and Hector “little things” because they don’t understand their homework assigned by Jessica (second grade) and Linda (third grade). For the past week, Verónica has been assigning them extra homework. Each student is given 10 flashcards that display a word in English (e.g., *hippo, crocodile*). For each word, they are to write it out three times on a piece of loose-leaf paper. When they return to school, Verónica quizzes them on spelling and pronunciation. As I

begin to wonder if the teachers and paraprofessionals are aware of the students workload outside of school, I notice Hector's behavior. His head is down on the table, and he appears to be crying. As Verónica tries to take his hand, Hector doesn't move. Inès and Marcos quietly look on as I ask Verónica if Hector is OK. "This is a problem. You tell them to do it but sometimes they don't." In Spanish, Verónica tries talking to him. Hector's crying becomes louder, and through his tears, he replies. A mix of heavy sobbing and muffled Spanish fill the room. Hector then punches the table and lays his head back down. "Hector is giving excuses," Verónica says to me. As I sit there, completely helpless, another paraprofessional walks by, and Verónica asks her to take Inès and Marcos back to the second-grade classroom. Unsure of what to do, I continue to watch as Verónica crouches down to Hector's level. Although he won't look at her, she begins to speak to him. I'm caught off-guard when, in English, she says, "It's necessary." Hector continues to talk and cry until he seems exhausted. In a reassuring voice, Verónica says, "It's OK," and rubs his back. She then sends Hector down to the drinking fountain to collect himself. While Hector is gone, Verónica tells me that he's embarrassed and ashamed for not having completed his homework for both Linda and Verónica. "He went to church, ate, and went to bed," Verónica says to me. When Hector returns, she has him write out on the table the following words: *the, to, and, a, I,* and *look*. "Good job," Verónica says. "There you go. Good job."

In this chapter, the preceding classroom narratives shed light on emerging tensions as I shifted from field texts to research texts. As I began to grapple with past feelings and emotions, I found myself disconnected from my identity as a researcher. I found it odd that while I initially entered this inquiry space as a teacher-researcher, as I began to make meaning of how my participants worked with Latinx immigrant students, several instances of "othering" forced me to recall my own past schooling experiences of feeling like an outsider. Although my past

schooling experiences differed greatly from those of the immigrant students of Ririe Elementary School, I found myself frustrated with my classroom observations and began judging my participants harshly. This is when I returned to narrative thinking. Reaching across the three-dimensional narrative space, I found myself exploring the narrative histories of my participants and the school community as a way of addressing emerging tensions that I was experiencing.

In the next chapter, as I find ways to making meaning of my classroom observations, you will find that I step back, reexamine the research puzzle and return to my field notes, researcher journals, and transcribed interviews. Specifically, I discuss the process of *narratively coding* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) my field texts. Additionally, I discuss positioning my field texts within a theoretical context using Swanson's Middle Range Theory of Caring (1991, 1993).

CHAPTER FIVE. CARE IS THE SAME. I MEAN, YES, MY ESL KIDS DO NEED MORE, BUT CARE IS CARE.

In Chapter Four, I discussed my experiences of becoming a classroom-based researcher. As I observed educators interacting with Latinx immigrant students, I often found myself frustrated by the words and behaviors directed toward those students, specifically undocumented students. Initially, as I reflected on emerging tensions, I found myself *leaning in* to my past experiences as a Muslim student in a Catholic school and distancing myself from my identity as an emerging researcher. As a way of addressing these emerging tensions, I returned to my research puzzle. Stepping back from my inquiry, I embraced narrative thinking and wondered how my participants defined and demonstrated an ethic of care. Throughout this inquiry, I used both "analysis of narrative" and "narrative analysis" (Polkinghorne, 1995) to ground my narrative thinking. Within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, at times I would find myself immersed in the significant moments of my participants' lived experiences and employed "narrative analysis" (Polkinghorne, 1995) to create classroom stories that portrayed "the richness and the nuances of meaning in human affairs" (p. 11). Additionally, as I read across my field notes, researcher journals, and transcribed interviews, I sought to ground these experiences in care. Using Polkinghorne's (1995) "analysis of narrative" to guide my thinking, I chose Swanson's (1991, 1993) Middle Range Theory of Caring as my conceptual framework.

Pedagogies of Care [14]

My interest in theories of care began when I was first introduced to the work of Nel Noddings, who has written extensively on care ethics with regards to the reciprocal relationship between *one who cares* and the *cared for*. Unpacking what it means to care is as complex as teaching itself, therefore, in Chapter Six, I highlight Nodding's (2012) conceptualization of care as it relates to the commitment teachers make, not only to themselves in terms of teaching and learning, but to the students and families they work with. Using Nodding's theory of care as a foundation, I then began to explore care theories that centered on the experiences of minoritized students.

Subtractive Schooling

Angela Valenzuela (1999, 2002, 2016), a leading scholar on Latino/a educational research, developed "subtractive schooling" (1999) as a conceptual framework after a three-year ethnographic study in which she examined the experiences of Mexican immigrant and Mexican American students in Texas. Valenzuela (1999) found that schools subtract resources from students by: 1) dismissing students' defection of education grounded in culture and 2) subtracting culture and language by promoting assimilationist policies. Building on the work of Noddings (1984), Valenzuela (1999) identified competing definitions of care. While teachers viewed care in terms of students caring *about* school, immigrant students sought out a holistic and authentic approach to care in terms of how they should be "assessed, valued, and engaged." Valenzuela (1999) argued that for teachers to adopt culturally additive practices, they must first

[14] Excerpts from the following literature was previously published in the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education.* A complete citation may be found under References.

become not only politically aware but must also seek out humanizing practices, such as culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teacher practices, grounded in care.

Asset Pedagogies

Gloria Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay are the foremost experts on how teachers adopt a humanizing pedagogy. For decades these accomplished scholars have challenged teachers in working with students and families to foster what Ladson-Billings (1995) described as critical engagement with the world. The theoretical frameworks of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay) have served as a map in preparing teachers to work with diverse student populations. Within the field of education, both theoretical frameworks are viewed as a response to the deficit schooling model that continues to dehumanize students of color.

Within these asset pedagogies is a unique subsection of cultural practices that focus specifically on caring for all students. Adding to Nodding's care theory, Gay's (2018) theory of culturally responsive caring is grounded in *caring for* instead of *caring about* minoritized students. According to Gay (2018), "the intended outcomes of 'caring for' are improved competence, agency, autonomy, efficacy, and empowerment in both the role functions (student) and quality of being (person) of ethically and culturally diverse students in school settings and elsewhere" (p. 58). This student-centered approach to teaching encourages students to live their best lives. Teachers act as advocates or guided mentors and care deeply for the emotional, social, and academic wellbeing of all students, especially minoritized groups. In Chapter Six, I invite Dr. Noddings and Dr. Gay to join my participants and me for imagined kitchen table conversations in the form of a play.

Middle Range Theory of Caring

Grounded in Nel Noddings' (1984; 2012) work on authentic caring, Swanson's (1991, 1993) Middle Range Theory of Caring was the conceptual framework that grounded my understanding of these experiences. This phenomenological study, contextualized within the field of nursing, outlines five caring processes: 1) *knowing*, 2) *being with*, 3) *doing for*, 4) *enabling*, and 5) *maintaining belief*. Swanson (1991) defines caring as "a nurturing way of relating to a valued other toward whom one feels a personal sense of commitment and responsibility" (p. 162). I specifically chose Swanson's theory because it provided me with a structured way of thinking about care. Unlike Noddings and Gay, who discuss the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of care, Swanson's (1991, 1993) work expresses care theories in action. The five caring processes provided me with a framework that guided my understanding as my participants defined care and demonstrated an ethic of care in the classroom. While Swanson's work is grounded in nursing, it applies to the field of education. Both nurses and teachers (*one who cares)* work closely with the *cared for* (patients and students). In this chapter, I discuss how I used Swanson's care theory to shape field texts into research texts in the form of *retellings*.

The following *retellings* illuminate my time spent in the second- and third-grade classrooms of Ririe Elementary School. Specifically, as a way of making meaning of my participants' experiences working with and caring for Latinx immigrant students, I analyzed my field notes, researcher journals, and transcribed interviews using Swanson's Middle Range Theory of Caring (1991, 1993). Initially, I read and reread my field texts numerous times, making note of significant moments. Then, for each participant, I read and reread all transcribed interviews and isolated key quotes that described specific interactions with Latinx immigrant

students. Again, for each participant, I categorized key quotes using Swanson's five caring processes. During the first round of coding, I used Microsoft Word as a tool for categorizing key quotes within each caring category. However, during the second round of coding, I printed each quote onto paper. After reading and rereading the key quotes, I labeled large sheets of poster paper with the appropriate caring processes (i.e., *knowing*, *being with*, *doing for*, *enabling*, and *maintaining belief*). Returning to Swanson's Middle Range Theory of Caring (1991, 1993), I then placed quotes into the corresponding categories. Often, I would find that a key quote would overlap into more than one caring process; however, serving as the instrument of analysis, I ultimately made decisions about which quotes were most appropriate for each particular category based on Swanson's descriptions of each caring process.

Similar to Chapter Four, in this chapter, you will find that I have divided the *retellings* by each participant's experience. Throughout this detailed analysis, you will come to know Linda, Jessica, and Verónica, as they describe their students, classroom environments, and the community of Ririe, Indiana. Swanson's conceptualization of care serves as a guide, as you begin to make meaning of how each participant came to know their Latinx immigrant students academically, socially, linguistically, and culturally. It is important to note, that each subheading corresponds to the classroom narratives found in the previous chapter. As you continue on this journey, you will find that returning to my research puzzle allowed me to step back from the personal and lean into the social significance of this inquiry.

Linda Welch's Third-Grade Classroom

Retelling: "Can you tell me those words?"

From the beginning, Linda allowed me full access to her classroom. She permitted me to photograph artifacts (i.e., classroom newsletters and assignments) and review her lesson plans. She did not seem to mind when students would ask me questions. What was I doing in their classroom? Did I like kids? Did I speak Spanish? Every so often, Linda would ask me to keep an eye on her class, when she needed to make a phone call or use the restroom. On a handful of occasions, she even asked me if I could work 1:1 with students who were struggling with their writing. Over time, I became quite comfortable in Linda's third-grade classroom.

Initially, I was excited when I purchased the third-grade English Language Arts reader and Linda announced to the class that they would be reading a story that included both Spanish and English text. In the Chapter Four narrative, *"Can You Tell Me Those Words*?*"* my excitement quickly turned to frustration when Hector, an emerging ELL student, experienced microaggressions at the hand of a paraprofessional who was selected by Linda to aid her students in improving their reading comprehension and writing skills. Microaggressions are subtle statements, everyday slights, directed toward marginalized groups of people, which can be verbal or nonverbal (Steketee et al., 2021; Sue 2016).

Knowing

According to Swanson (1991, 1993), *knowing* involves the *caregiver* thoroughly assessing the condition and reality of the *cared for's* life. Because Hector was the only emerging ELL and undocumented student in her third-grade class, Linda's knowledge of who he was as a learner was limited.

> *Because we didn't have any ESL aides, he struggled immensely. He was away from home, from what I understand, it's just he and dad here. Everything new. Didn't speak the language. Nobody really to help him, so the girls, bless their hearts, stepped in and did as much as they could. But he's much better now that we have Ms. Salinas [ESL paraprofessional] to help him out because he feels like he's got that safety net. And she's been working with him on just basic, good morning, how are you, things like that.*

At the beginning of the fall semester, when Ririe did not have an English as a Second Language (ESL) paraprofessional, Linda relied on the immigrant girls in her class to communicate with Hector on her behalf. Striving to understand Hector's lived experiences, as well as his needs as a learner, Linda would request that the girls take turns translating for Hector, as well as making sure that he was on task. When Verónica Salinas accepted the ESL paraprofessional position in mid-September, she began working with Hector one on one and in small groups; however, the third-grade girls still assisted Linda with developing an informed understanding (Swanson, 1993) of Hector's academic and social-emotional needs while in the classroom.

Being With

As a classroom teacher at Ririe Elementary for nearly 40 years, as well as a lifelong resident of the town, Linda recognized that when Daniela, the former ESL paraprofessional, made the decision not to return to Ririe in the fall, her immigrant students would suffer. Linda experienced shared feelings of loss (Swanson, 1991) with her students in the wake of Daniela's departure because she relied on Daniela's expertise to work with the immigrant population of Ririe Elementary. However, these shared feelings did not translate into conveying ongoing availability (Swanson, 1991) for her immigrant students.

> *They were kind of adrift. They kind of felt abandoned. At first, they thought she [Daniela] was just over there [Jr./Sr. high school] for awhile, because she'd go for conferences and things, and then I said, 'No, boys and girls. She's not coming back and they said, 'WHAT?! SHE'S NOT COMING BACK?'" I mean, they were really upset and I said, 'Well, they need her there and they're going to hire*

> *somebody else as soon as they can.' So, they were kind of worried and it was hard for them. Once they met her [Verónica], I mean, they love her, the girls especially, they want to be with her all of the time. So, they were OK then, once they realized that there was going to be somebody there for them.*

While Linda appreciated the reality of the situation (Swanson, 1993), her immigrant students were left to worry and wonder when a new, caring adult would be hired for them.

Doing For

For the immigrant students who were bilingual, *doing for* involved anticipating their academic needs in the classroom (Swanson, 1991; 1993). The immigrant girls in Linda's third-grade class have attended Ririe Elementary School since Kindergarten and, overall, she was pleased with their academic progress.

> *If they're able to function, and get what they need out of the class, I would rather them be in here, but like with Hector, he's not getting much out of what I'm saying, so he spends more time over there with her [Verónica], working on basic English.*

For Linda, the language barrier that existed between herself and Hector prevented her from "performing competently and skillfully" (Swanson, 1991; 1993) as Hector's teacher. In addition to relying on bilingual students to support Hector, Linda depended on additional paraprofessional support. According to Swanson (1991) *doing for* is the process of care that is "comforting, anticipatory, protective of the other's needs, and performed competently and skillfully" (p. 164). By laughing at Hector, the paraprofessional failed to acknowledge the cultural and linguistic differences of diverse students without "pejorative judgments" (Gay, 2018). In *doing for* another, the caregiver is charged with protecting and "preserving the dignity of the other" (Swanson, 1991, p. 164), thus valuing a student's humanity. The role of a caregiver is to simply do for another, protecting the other's wholeness (Swanson, 1993). Instead of placing Hector in a

situation that forced him to "educate" the paraprofessional and his classmates on the pronunciation of Spanish words, as Linda did, white educators have an ethical responsibility to address their cultural deficiencies and biases toward students whose backgrounds differ from their own.

Enabling

Although Linda was the third-grade teacher, she relied on the ESL paraprofessionals' expertise in Spanish to support her immigrant students academically.

> *We went from somebody who had been here for years, had gone to a lot of training and all of that, to a young, new person [Verónica] who, this is just, she's just starting. So, she's just kind of learning what she needs to do to help the kids, and on my part, it's hard because I forget that she doesn't know this, or I have to tell her this, or I have to give her the materials to do it. So, it's a learning experience. I think, so far, she's really working hard and trying to do the best she can do for the kids. But, it's a change.*

Even though she was the new ESL paraprofessional, Verónica had not received training to support immigrant students' English language acquisition (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, and writing); therefore, she was unfamiliar with how to best enable her students' academic "long-term well-being" (Swanson, 1993). While Linda did provide Verónica with materials for students to complete English language arts and math assignments, she assumed that because Verónica could communicate in both Spanish and English, she knew how to coach, inform, and explain (Swanson, 1993) the curriculum.

Retelling: "I have no idea"

Because Hector was the sole emerging ELL student in Linda's class, I was especially curious about Linda's interactions with him. While she would often make hand gestures,

pointing to his laptop or to the lunch count clipboard, Linda left the bulk of communication to Hector's bilingual classmates. While students worked on class assignments, Linda would often circulate the room, stopping by specific students' desks to check in; however, she rarely seemed to acknowledge Hector. In the early days of the fall semester, Hector would walk up to Linda's desk when he needed help. Immediately, Linda would ask one of the girls to translate. By mid-semester, Hector was communicating directly with the girls, who "schooled" him on activities, homework, and even appropriate classroom behaviors.

In the Chapter Four narrative *"I have no idea,"* I hoped to illuminate the linguistic and social challenges that Hector faced as an emerging ELL student. With Linda maintaining the status quo, Hector was further marginalized within the classroom environment. Instead of the school adapting to meet his needs, Hector found himself in several situations where he was often academically and socially isolated from his peers.

Knowing

As a way of making meaning of the *cared for's* life, *knowing* involves centering on their condition and reality (Swanson, 1991; 1993). Instead of using technology (e.g., Google Translate) to communicate with Hector, Linda relied on her bilingual students.

> *In the beginning, they were essential. He [Hector] couldn't speak any English and I, he would get so upset and say, 'I don't speak English' in Spanish. [laughter] I could get the English. And he'd get really frustrated, so they were great then but then they kind of started the group mother hen, you know? And it's like, 'No, no, no. I asked Carmen to do it, the rest of you go sit down' so I have to, kind of fend some of them off, I try to kind of rotate, depending on what it is I need them to explain, some of the girls kind of struggle. Elena can explain to some extent, but she kind of struggles explaining some things. Actually, the person that I've found that has the most luck is Lucía, and her family is from Puerto Rico. The other girls, Honduras and Guatemala and Mexico, so they're from all different places and so I think their Spanish varies. I know our kids that come from, like Mexico into Texas, their Spanish is a little different. They have kind of that Tex Mex, but Lucía seems to have the most success, sometimes, explaining things.*

While she often wondered if the girls were capable of effectively communicating directions or the main idea of a story, Linda placed the onus for engaging with Hector directly on his fellow third-grade peers.

Being With

Being emotionally present to the one *cared for* involves becoming emotionally open to their reality (Swanson, 1991). For Linda, while she knew that Hector would become upset, she did not take the time to provide an authentic presence (Swanson, 1993).

> *So he's feeling more relaxed, but he still, were you in here when he had his head down? I still don't know what happened there, what was going on. He tends to cry and pout out when things don't go his way or he doesn't want to do what we are going to do. He just kind of shuts down.*

In these moments, when Hector was visibly upset, he was left on his own to comfort himself. While Linda appeared concerned about his well-being, she did not provide the necessary "commitment, concern, and personal attentiveness" (Swanson, 1993) needed to create a caring relationship.

Doing For

Doing for involves anticipating the *cared for* person's needs (Swanson, 1991; 1993). Linda genuinely wanted her students to succeed academically. She often spoke of "best practices" to prepare them for fourth grade.

> *Build on their successes. Find where they are and try to build on what they can do. Because I know they feel lost and frustrated. So, I try to find what they can do, like Hector, he is good at math. He's not a bad reader in Spanish, either, but I would just have him do the problems that didn't have the words. Just do these and he would do those, and he'd be successful but now we are kind of building into, once you do this one, how will the girls read it to him. So, I think, meet them where they are and build from there, which is hard.*

For Hector, as a way of meeting his linguistic needs when he was in her classroom, Linda would place him on a computer with a program that promoted English language acquisition. She also supported Verónica's one-on-one and small group work with Hector. Although Linda struggled to communicate with Hector, she did recognize that he excelled in mathematics. After several months and adjustments to her schedule, Verónica worked with Linda to support Hector during in-class instruction.

Enabling

For Linda, *enabling* involved preparing her immigrant students academically for the transition to third grade.

> *I'd like to think that I don't give up on students. Sometimes it's really hard for me to do. You know, that you keep trying, and if one thing doesn't work, you try something else. And, keep trying to meet that student on their level and trying to move them ahead, as much as you can, even if they're way back here and the other kids are up here, at least trying to keep them moving ahead.*

Although she focused on a curriculum that supported them as ELL students, Linda did consciously select stories for her ELL students that were in both Spanish and English.

Retelling: "It's just one test"

As a former teacher, I understand that it is important not to have "favorite" students, but over several months, I came to adore certain students in Linda's third-grade class. Elena reminded me of myself in third grade. She had thick glasses and long dark hair and was extremely shy but fiercely loyal to her friends. Academically, we also shared a common label—"struggling reader." Linda would often share information about her students' family lives or academic status during her prep period, and I soon learned that while she enjoyed having Elena in her class, Linda found Elena to be academically weak.

In the Chapter Four narrative "*It's just one test*," I struggled as a researcher, observing Lucía crawl across the classroom floor, desperately trying to connect with her best friend Elena, who was in tears. At that moment, I was rooting for Linda, hoping she would connect with Elena on an emotional level (Swanson, 1991), but I would later learn that Linda cared for her students in her own way.

Knowing

As a way of striving to understand the linguistic needs of her students, for Linda, *knowing* meant engaging the "self of both" (Swanson, 1991). Therefore, "knowing occurs, the selves of both provider and recipient are engaged" (Swanson, 1993, p. 163). As the mother of two adopted children, she often reflected on her daughters' experiences with English acquisition as a way of informing her understanding (Swanson, 1993).

> *And we've talked here, not just our migrant kids, but a lot of our kids have very limited vocabularies, very limited experience range and so, we talked about, before I adopted my girls, orphanage vocabulary, and a lot of kids who are adopted when they're older have an orphanage vocabulary. They only know the basic words, they don't have any of the experiences and other vocabulary, and I feel like some of our kids here, have that kind of vocabulary. It's just the, sit down, eat your food, go to bed. You know, there's no other discussion or they haven't been places to pick up new vocabulary.*

Approximately 75% of Ririe's population has been identified as economically disadvantaged by the state's DOE (Compass Data, 2019). While Linda recognized that her emerging ELL students faced linguistic barriers, she also viewed many of Ririe's non-Hispanic students as having an English language deficit. Often, Linda would make connections between students' socioeconomic status and academic performance in the classroom.

Being With

Being emotionally present to the *cared for* involves simply being there (Swanson, 1991; 1993). Linda's responsibility to her students as learners was to prepare them to be successful on the English language arts and mathematics standardized tests (e.g., ILEARN, IREAD-3). For third-graders, this often meant rigorous test preparation.

> *Especially in this day and age of test, test, test, test, I find them getting angry with me because I'm asking too much of them. And so, sometimes we will just talk and say, I know this is hard, I know that some of this is maybe more than you can handle and, you know, I'm sorry about that, but it's not me making these decisions and we're going to work together to just do the best that we can do.*

For immigrant students, the addition of the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessments (WIDA), designed to assess students' English proficiency levels, led to student anxiety. As a way of expressing shared feelings by conveying her ongoing availability of support (Swanson, 1991), Linda demonstrated an emotional presence of care.

Doing For

According to Swanson (1991, 1993), *doing for* involves comforting the other and protecting them from undo harm. Although Linda expressed the need to "check in" with her students each day, due to time constraints, Linda did not find time during class instruction to conference with students on an individual basis.

> *Making sure you connect with everybody, every day. And just, trying to see things from their perspective, because sometimes if you can figure out what's causing the behavior, you'll find that there's something that happened this morning or last night, or that the behavior is actually stemming from, other than school, and that takes time that we don't have really, especially now with this shorter recess time that we have. We don't have as much time to pull kids individually and sit down and talk to them.*

When students found themselves in situations where they would become visibly upset during in-class instruction, Linda would distance herself from the situation, by remaining focused on

instruction. For immigrant students who were often reserved in the classroom setting, they were left on their own to emotionally support themselves, or, in the case of *"It's just one test,"* were lucky enough to be comforted by the other immigrant students (Swanson, 1991; 1993).

Enabling

Nearly one-third of Linda's third-grade class identified as Hispanic. Academically, Linda was proud of their progress and was optimistic about their "long term well-being" (Swanson, 1993).

> *On the whole, this group [immigrant students] is a harder-working group. They're more willing to put forth more effort, they don't frustrate as easily. So, they're ahead of where last years were.*

For her bilingual students, her expectations were the same as for the other students in her class. The only exception was Hector, an emerging ELL, whom Linda believed was at an academic disadvantage in English language arts due to the linguistic barriers he faced.

Retelling: "Ándale, ándale"

Throughout this narrative inquiry, observations expanded beyond the classroom. I observed students in the cafeteria, on the playground, in the hallways. Throughout the week, Linda's students attended "special" classes (i.e., gym, art, music), and while they learned how to play the triangle or engaged in 3:3 basketball, I was with them, jotting down notes in my yellow notepad.

On picture day, I had several students show me their "fancy clothes"—a purple dress with ruffles, a AC/DC t-shirt. The mood of the school was abuzz with excited students, or so I thought. In the Chapter Four narrative *"Ándale, ándale,"* I wanted to give you, the reader, a sense of what happens when as educators, we fail to connect with our students as humans.

Knowing

Striving to understand events for the *cared for* involves thoroughly assessing their condition and reality (Swanson, 1991; 1993). While Linda recognized Hector as a significant being (Swanson, 1991), she struggled to support his social-emotional needs.

> *Because you will have some kids [immigrant students] that will come in and they're just, motivated and everybody else is speaking English, and I want to learn English, and they work really hard and they, he's [Hector] is one that just tends to shut down instead of being more motivated. He gets depressed and sad and so, he's been harder to help because you know, he just kind of shuts down. And one day he was crying and the girls asked him what was wrong and he was just sad because he couldn't talk to his friends. I was like, poor kid.*

Linda relied on her other immigrant students to support Hector when he was visibly upset. Because of the language barrier, Linda often relied on visual cues (Swanson, 1991; 1993) as a way of informing her understanding.

Being With

Being emotionally present to the *cared for* means becoming emotionally open to their reality (Swanson, 1991). Linda blamed the language barrier between herself and Hector for her inability to provide an authentic presence (Swanson, 1993).

> *It's kind of dumb, I think. [chuckle] They mother-hen him to death. I saw one of them, one day, they were dragging him across, I said 'No, no, no. You tell him with words and then it's up to him to do it.' So, he gets frustrated with them.*

While Linda acknowledged that the role of "teacher helper" had often gone to the girls' heads, she truly believed that they were necessary to provide an ongoing availability of "commitment, concern, and personal attentiveness" (Swanson, 1993) that Linda was unable to provide to Hector.

Doing For

According to Swanson (1991, 1993), *doing for* entails actions that are provided by the one caring for the *cared for*. While Linda could not alleviate Hector's pain, she sought ways of preserving the dignity and wholeness of the *cared for*.

> *Frustrated sometimes, just without having the resources that we need. When we didn't have anybody to help them, I would be so, almost in tears with him. [Hector]. I felt so bad for him. Because I went to China and I've been in that position where everybody spoke Chinese and I didn't, so I know how frustrating it is. I've been there. I've been the one standing there [with] a deer-in-the-headlights look, going, 'I don't know what you're saying' and it's hard. And I was in that for a short time. That's what I told somebody earlier. I was there for a week. He's here for the long-term and he knows it. So, it's even more frustrating for him, but I try to be empathetic. I try to be, like stressing that everybody's culture is different, everybody's family came from somewhere. Kind of sharing traditions from different parts of the world, so that we all kind of realize that we're all a family even though we come from different places.*

As a way of connecting with Hector, Linda relied on her experiences as a mother to guide her actions. Each year, she taught a social studies unit on Chinese culture as a way of sharing her adoption story with her students and promoting cultural awareness.

Enabling

As a way of facilitating her immigrant students' passage through school, Linda sought to "coach, inform, and explain" (Swanson, 1993).

> *I worry extra about them; when I'm planning lessons, or how is this going to work with my Spanish-speaking students or is there something in this that they won't understand or are there words here that I'm going to need to explain that I wouldn't explain to my other kids. I just do a lot of extra thinking about them when I'm doing planning or coming up with lessons or ideas. Like I said, I worry a little bit more [about them] than I do the rest, so, it's a lot of extra thinking about those kids. And how you're going to approach the lessons and everything.*

Linda did recognize that many of her bilingual immigrant students needed additional academic instruction; therefore, during reading groups, she would assign several of her immigrant students

to work in small groups with Verónica, the ESL paraprofessional, outside of the classroom. However, the expectation was that eventually, all students would conform to the third-grade curriculum. For emerging ELL students like Hector, his classroom instruction often consisted of computer programs designed to teach him English.

Maintaining Belief

Swanson (1993) posits that *maintaining belief* is a philosophical attitude that guides "what matters and where to address care" (p. 354). It was clear from my conversations with Linda that she was hopeful that her immigrant students were capable of academic success. Specifically, with Hector, *maintaining belief* meant recognizing his strengths and areas of improvement.

> *Being willing to keep trying. And, trying to meet that child where they need you to be. You know, and keep not giving up, I guess. Trying to provide them with what they need at that moment.*

However, Linda's perception of success for her immigrant students focused on assimilation into the classroom environment.

> *I mean we've had them actually for so long, the number is growing, but um, I'm just amazed, sometimes, at how quickly they assimilate. When they come in and they're new, they don't know much English, or no English, how quickly, now Noe hasn't done that and I worry about him, but um, last year I had a little girl come in and she didn't know English, very bright, and I mean, she worked and worked and worked. And this was in a few weeks, she was able to ask, and get questions, Can I go to the restroom? Can I get a drink? and you know, understand basic directions. She was another one if she got going, and she cried when they moved because she liked it. Bless her heart.*

Overall, Linda maintained a "hope filled attitude" (Swanson, 1991) for her immigrant students, as long as they were progressing toward the dominant classroom norms.

Jessica Reed's Second-Grade Classroom

Retelling: "The Boy in the Blue Box"

Jessica's teaching reputation preceded her. Over the summer months, as I made plans to observe her second-grade class, I had a chance to speak with community members (e.g., paraprofessionals, substitute teachers, parents) about the school. Through these informal, organic conversations, comments about the teaching staff arose. Overall, Jessica was credited with being an "excellent" teacher and disciplinarian. While I wasn't exactly sure what this meant, I was curious. What did this mean for the immigrant students of Jessica's second-grade class? How did she work with and care for these students through an ethic of care?

On the day of my first observation, I arrived 40 minutes early to find Jessica in her classroom grading a stack of papers. She explained that she enjoyed the quiet early morning hours and would arrive roughly 1 hour before her students arrived to catch up on her work. At that moment, I was reminded of the amount of time that teaching required. The school day did not begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 3:00 p.m. While Jessica graded, we chatted about her immigrant students. At the time, she had the largest population of immigrant students, four of whom identified as emerging ELL students. I had learned from Daniela, the former ESL paraprofessional that these students were also undocumented. In my initial conversation with Jessica, what struck me as interesting was her comment that, "You know, they [immigrant students] deserve to be respected." Smiling, I made a note in my field journal and looked forward to observing Jessica's interactions with her students.

In the Chapter Four narrative *"The Boy in the Blue Box,"* I desperately sought to make meaning of Jessica's ethic of care. While it was clear from the classroom observations that she cared deeply for some of her students, for the immigrant students who made up one-third of her class, she remained guarded. The lack of an emotional connection with these students led to

questionable classroom management. Instead of centering care on her immigrant students, Jessica found herself pushing them into the margins.

Knowing

According to Swanson (1991), *knowing* involves engaging the "self of both." Jessica's professional identity as a teacher was shaped by her experiences as a student. As a way of knowing, Jessica centered care (Swanson, 1991; 1993) on those second-grade students she believed were struggling with unidentified learning disabilities.

> *I had an IEP [Individualized Education Plan] all throughout high school. I remember going into the meetings. I was told, when I was going between fifth grade and sixth grade, I would never be a teacher, I would never graduate high school, or if I did, it would be with the basic Core 40, and I'd never go to college. They told me I would have to have someone walk me to the bathroom.*

For two students in particular—Grant, a white boy, and Brie, an African American girl—Jessica spent a tremendous amount of time throughout the school day addressing their specific social-emotional needs.

> *Most of them crave, do crave affection and touch because they don't get it at home. Or even the communication. They don't get that at home. Grant. He's one that I know, I probably care more than I should. He's not really my favorite but he's the one that my heart has gone, has bled for. I know he's being neglected, I know he's not cared for, I know he's not loved. God, I'm getting teary-eyed just thinking about this. I worry about him more than any other child. I worry about Brie a lot. But when the day comes down, who am I more likely to say a prayer for, it's Grant. It's the hardest, knowing that I have to tell him I'm not going to be there, at some point, or him realizing that I'm not there, is going to rip him a new one. If I could figure out a way to stick a note in his backpack, the last day of school saying, if I don't come back, find me if you need me. I really want to reach out to Grandma on that last day and make sure I get her phone number and stuff and being like, I know this isn't allowed but if you need help, let me know because I'm not coming back and I care too much. I guarantee you when I go back to school, I'll get a hug from him at some point that week. He loves fixing things. He's been helping me fix stools and putting them together and stuff. So, he'd be a good handyman. He really needs to be a mechanic or someone who can work with his hands because he struggles a lot but he can follow directions down to a tee. I mean, he just shuts down and that's an emotional disability.*

Jessica genuinely cared for Grant and Brie; however, her understanding of their home lives was grounded in deficit thinking. She attributed their academic underachievement and behavioral issues to poverty and family composition (Walker, 2011); both Grant and Brie were being raised in single-parent households.

Specifically, for her immigrant students, Jessica's deficit perspective hindered her ability to thoroughly assess all aspects of their condition and reality (Swanson, 1991; 1993). In the case of Leo, an immigrant student, Jessica attributed his poor academic performance and behavioral issues to the presence of a disability, as well as to his English proficiency (Kangas, 2014).

> *I could instantly tell there was something wrong with him. I mean, it's not just the ESL stuff, there's something legitimately wrong. But because he's ESL, I can't get him an IEP.*

Jessica lacked an informed understanding, which led to several assumptions about Leo's linguistic and cultural heritage, as well as his abilities in the classroom (e.g., emotional, learning). Jessica's inability and/or unwillingness to engage the "self of both" left Leo physically and socially "othered" by his classmates and support staff members.

Being With

Being emotionally present to the *cared for* involves fostering an authentic presence (Swanson, 1991; 1993). For those immigrant students who Jessica deemed, "behavior problems," she had a difficult time being emotionally open to their reality (Swanson, 1991). She often questioned their commitment as learners, thereby creating a barrier for possible "shared meanings, feelings, and experiences" (Swanson, 1993, p. 355).

> *Behaviors have gotten worse, and the immigrants or things have gotten to the point that they just don't care.*

Although most immigrant families in Ririe work at the local dairy and pig farms, Jessica considered her immigrant students to be "migrants." Assumptions about her students' legal and migratory status made it challenging for Jessica to convey ongoing availability (Swanson, 1991) in the form of emotional support.

> *Care is the same. I mean, yes, my ESL kids do need more, but care is care. When it boils down to it. There's one [immigrant student] to my knowledge he's gone and he was, no amount of caring would have affected him. Caring is caring. That's all I've got to say, if you don't show it, they aren't going to get it. And they won't do anything for you if you don't care for them.*

Jessica equated behavior with care, thus leaving immigrant students like Leo, without any emotional support. Leo's physical and social isolation was counter to the "commitment, concern, and personal attentiveness" (Swanson, 1993) needed to be emotionally present to the *cared for.*

Doing For

Whenever possible, a caregiver performs competently and skillfully to preserve the wholeness of the *cared for* (Swanson, 1991; 1993). For those students who did not have an IEP, Jessica was discouraged by the process of identifying and testing. She believed that when a student, like Leo, was recognized by the teachers as a "behavior problem," immediate steps needed to be taken to test the student. Frustrated with the educational system, as well as with Leo's parents, and without an IEP, Jessica took it upon herself to provide her students with behavior plans (e.g., the blue tape around Leo's desk). From Jessica's perspective, isolating Leo both physically and socially from his classmates was her way of addressing his needs.

> *It takes, they [the school] have to wait 2-3 years after the kid has not been proven having an IEP or needing one, to retest. That's bogus. The fact that we have to prove now, so much that the state requires before we go through and test, and unless you twist the parent's arm, to go and request testing, and there's one in my class, we got finally his parents to request testing and then she's [guardian] never*

> *brought back the signed paperwork. He's been held back and he should be held back again. He's not ready. Linda is going to kill him.*

Swanson (1991, 1993) posits that *doing for* protects the other from harm while preserving their dignity. In Leo's case, Jessica was adamant that interventions and strategies should be implemented to address his behavioral "issues." Without a full examination of the intersectionality of race and ability, Jessica's assumptions about Leo's behavior and academic performance did not support a caring environment and thus did not preserve the wholeness of the student.

Enabling

While Swanson argues that the role of a caregiver is to help facilitate the *cared for's* "passage through life transitions and unfamiliar events" (Swanson, 1991, p. 164), Jessica's perceptions about learning motivation and behavior (Brandmiller et al., 2020) differed for immigrant boys and girls.

> *They hide their potential. I see that a lot more [behavior issues] in the Hispanic boys than I do the girls, for whatever reason. I don't know if it's a culture thing, I don't know if it's because I'm a woman teacher. Because I know, my husband keeps saying, well, if they're truly from Mexico, that they have a different view on women.*

Without an informed understanding of her student's cultural heritage, Jessica's deficit perceptions about Hispanic males' learning motivation and classroom behavior did not validate their reality (Swanson, 1993), rather, it is a form of racial discrimination.

Retelling: "Water Rolls, Water Rises/ ~~El Agua Rueda, El Agua Sube"~~

During those first few classroom observations, Jessica used the Google Translate app on her phone to communicate with her emerging ELL students. However, less than a month into the school year, that had stopped. Jessica did not allow her immigrant students to speak Spanish with

each other in class; therefore, when they did have a question, they would walk up to her desk with their laptops. After they typed in their questions in Spanish, the computer would read the English translation aloud. Often, the translation was incorrect, leaving Jessica unable to communicate with her students.

In the Chapter Four narrative *"Water Rolls, Water Rises/ ~~El Agua Rueda, El Agua Sube~~"* the omission of Spanish words and phrases from the classroom walls, as well as the poem that was in English, clued me in to the reality of Ririe Elementary. While 40% of the student population spoke Spanish, the monolingual curriculum not designed to support them. Although Verónica would eventually come to Ririe and work with the immigrant students in one-on-one and small group settings, often the emerging ELL students would be pulled out of class for English practice with the woman who oversaw the Title 1 program—a white, monolingual, former classroom teacher. The school hoped that the emerging ELL students would assimilate quickly.

Knowing

For Jessica, *knowing* her immigrant students meant promoting a monolingual curriculum. To address their linguistic needs, Jessica aligned the second-grade curriculum to the Indiana state standards to prepare all students for the upcoming standardized tests.

> *And that's how I've been taught. Push English because they have to know how to speak it. To be able to do anything, especially iRead and things.*

The condition and reality (Swanson, 1991; 1993) for Jessica's emerging ELL students required a focus on readings skills that would support English language acquisition. Therefore, a selection of multicultural literature was not made available to Jessica's students.

Being With

Being with involves appreciating the reality of the *cared for* (Swanson, 1993). While Jessica acknowledged the linguistic barrier that existed between herself and the immigrant students, she lacked "shared feelings" (Swanson, 1991), thus hindering any emotional connection. If a student appeared disengaged (by laying their head on a desk or leaving their paper blank), Jessica saw this as an overt lack of caring by the student.

Honestly, it was the lack of motivation. Like they didn't care.

Specifically, for her undocumented immigrant students, Jessica was unable to provide an authentic presence of care (Swanson, 1993) because she questioned her students' placement within the classroom. She was skeptical not only about who her students were as learners but about who they were as human beings.

> *He would pretend he didn't know English, he would pretend he didn't know Spanish, at times. So, there's no, I couldn't figure out how to get over that barrier. She looks like a four-year-old. I wonder if her papers are correct*
>
> .

Unfortunately, Jessica's inability to "simply give of the self" (Swanson, 1993) left her emerging ELL students undervalued both academically and socially.

I feel like I'm neglecting them, but I can't neglect the rest of my other students.

Jessica acknowledged that her emerging ELL students were being "othered," but she believed that her "commitment, concern, and personal attentiveness" (Swanson, 1993) belonged with the majority of her students, thus further marginalizing the four emerging ELL students from their immigrant peers.

Doing For

Because of linguistic barrier between Jessica and her immigrant students, she relied on computer programs to communicate with her emerging ELL students. While she did find success teaching her students math, she struggled to anticipate their language needs (Swanson, 1991; 1993). Often, emerging ELL students were left on their own, working through English language arts and math computer programs. These computer programs were intended to support a monolingual curriculum.

Jessica had trained as a reading specialist, yet her teacher education program did not prepare her to work with diverse populations. Her emerging ELL students also met with the Title 1 teacher each day, for additional English practice.

> *It's reading. Reading has been a challenge. It really has to do with the reading and communication. How to get those reading skills translated into whatever language. And if they do speak English, they're still not understanding spoken versus written English. It's harder. Math is where I succeed, 9 times out of 10. I can get them through in math even with using my other programs. They like the other programs I use, for the most part. They like the reward that it gives or the game time, or whatever, so it's an enticement. Especially like extra math, it's not a fight because it translates into Spanish or English or whatever language I want, which is a great program. I don't know how you would do it for reading when you have, reading is different. So many different languages because of how the grammar is and how, it's different. And trying to get reading across anyway, and that's why I have them on that new iRead program. I was pushing that, especially with those lower four [emerging ELL students]. It's the only way that I could teach them because I didn't have time for one-on-one.*

Centering on the one *cared for* is foundational to thoroughly assessing all aspects of the *cared for's* life (Swanson, 1991; 1993). By providing an English-only version of the poem *Water Rolls, Water Rises* instead of the original Spanish/English version, Jessica missed an opportunity to fully engage with her emerging ELL students, as well as to promote their heritage language as an asset.

Enabling

To prepare her emerging ELL students for "passage through life transitions and unfamiliar events" (Swanson, 1991, p. 164), Jessica maintained that it was to her students' benefit to learn English quickly.

> *I have to push English on them because I can't. I don't want to say old, but your brain stops growing, I mean, they're going to pick up English as a second language so much faster than me learning Spanish, right now. And so, I feel bad because I can't, like I had to tell them repeatedly, you have to speak in English. They have to learn it because they're not speaking it at home.*

Instead of promoting additive bilingualism (Souto-Manning, 2016), which "assures the other's long-term well-being" (Swanson, 1993) in bilingual and multilingual learners, Jessica believed that her immigrant students required English immersion to succeed in school. Jessica did not consider the lasting impact that subtractive bilingualism would have on her students' first language and heritage culture.

Retelling: "Lost: In Translation"

Each year, school districts in Indiana administer the WIDA for students identified as ELL students. During the months that I spent observing Jessica's second-grade classroom, I struggled to make meaning in terms of how she designed the curriculum to meet the needs of her immigrant students. Although Jessica had received her students' WIDA scores from the previous year, she distrusted the results.

In our frequent informal and formal conversations about her immigrant students, Jessica placed them into two categories: 1) bilingual and 2) Spanish only. Jessica appeared to favor the bilingual students because they more easily assimilated into her classroom and did not require additional attention. For those students who were identified as "Spanish only" I refer to them as emerging ELLs. In the Chapter Four narrative *"Lost: In Translation,"* I explored the barriers

Jessica faced as she attempted to work with her emerging ELL students, all of whom were undocumented.

Knowing

According to Swanson (1991, 1993) centering on the one *cared for* involves an informed understanding. Without support from an established ESL program, Jessica was left on her own to wonder about her students' linguistic abilities.

> *Honestly, sometimes I wonder what they speak. One boy that moved out of my classroom, he swore, you know he spoke Spanish, but then he'd also pretend that he didn't know English or Spanish. So, it makes me wonder if there were a third language in there. That he was just, that he couldn't translate between the three.*

Frustrated, Jessica believed that the best way of supporting emerging ELL students was to separate them from the general population.

> *There's such a language barrier. They really, I know we're not to do segregation but some of those kids who are coming in for the first time, into a school, really should be segregating until they have a kindergarten level speaking. I hate doing that, but I don't know enough Spanish nor does half the population of the schools. I know numbers in Spanish. I can count pretty high and if someone starts counting with me, I can count higher. The math, they could stay in there for, but the reading, until they understand, they're just sitting.*

The emerging ELL students in Jessica's second-grade class were viewed by her as a hindrance to themselves and the overall classroom environment. Instead of working with Verónica, the ESL paraprofessional, to support students in both languages and create an inclusive environment, Jessica believed that the best course of action was to isolate the ESL population. This plan of action does not recognize the *cared for* as a "significant being" (Swanson, 1993), nor does it support a caring environment.

Being With

It is no surprise that Jessica was unable to establish meaningful connections with her immigrant students on an emotional level. In addition to having communication barriers with her students, Jessica did not take the time needed to appreciate her students' realities (Swanson 1993). In the case of Esteban, an undocumented student, Jessica questioned his family's lived experiences.

> *You can tell which parents care and which ones didn't care, and which ones made up excuses. Esteban's dad made up excuses left and right. And well, he saw this, he saw me almost murdered, so this is why he acts this way. And I'm like, he's been here over a year, two years, almost.*

Jessica believed that the amount of time spent in U.S. schools equated to a student's language acquisition. From her perspective, the onus was on the immigrant students and their families to learn English and assimilate into the educational system.

Doing For

As the second-grade classroom teacher of immigrant students, Jessica believed that she was unable to anticipate their needs (Swanson, 1991; 1993) because she did not speak Spanish. For her emerging ELL students, she believed that they did not belong in a general education class until specific language benchmarks had been met.

> *There's no point. They'd be better off in a secluded [classroom]. Teach them how to read in Spanish. Teach them how to read in English. Once they have the Spanish foundation in reading, then they can get the English. They don't have that. And then you're expecting them to learn to read in English.*

This approach to instruction does not preserve the "wholeness of the other" (Swanson, 1993), nor does it support an inclusive classroom environment.

Enabling

Providing information and explanations is one way that a *caregiver* facilitates the *cared for's* transition through unfamiliar situations (Swanson, 1991; 1993). Often during English language arts lessons, Jessica struggled to assess her students as learners. This frustration led to identifying students as "behavior problems" and threats to call home. For her students whose parents were bilingual, Jessica felt comfortable reaching out to parents to address issues that arose.

> *I can call Marcos' [parents]. I can also call, no they're not in my class anymore, that was last year. There're some [parents] that they'll bend over backward to make sure they learn English to do it. I'm thinking of one in third grade. Her dad came in and was like, if there's anything wrong whatsoever, this will be nipped in the bud. I only had one problem and he made her come in and apologize. He made her walk up to me, she was bawling because he came in and got her and yelled at her. And said this will be dealt with, I don't know all he said, but he said it in both English and Spanish. Because he started off in English and then he went to a couple of words in Spanish. I have a feeling your butt's going to get beat too. But she came back, she went up and hugged the kid and said I'm sorry. I won't do this again.*

Overall, Jessica was inconsistent in her approach to curriculum and classroom management for immigrant students. Her inability to connect with students in meaningful ways led to feelings of frustration and distrust, thus contributing to further marginalization of her students.

Retelling: "Sore Feet"

As a former teacher, I often reflect on the words I used to communicate with my students. Did I say something to offend them? To make them feel, "less than"? Or did I express kindness and gratitude? Did my actions align with my words? As the months of classroom observations continued, I found it challenging to remain a silent observer. While I desperately tried to make meaning of Jessica's interactions with her immigrant students, the words she spoke aloud to them often remained with me long after I left the classroom.

In the Chapter Four narrative *"Sore Feet,"* Jessica's interactions with Inès, an undocumented girl from Honduras, are challenging to revisit. As teachers, how do we support students academically when we fail to address their other needs (e.g., physical, emotional, social)?

Knowing

Striving to understand the life of the *cared for* is central to knowing (Swanson, 1991; 1993). In many ways, Jessica distanced herself from her immigrant students. Often, she would allow the bilingual students to care for the needs of the emerging ELL students.

> *They [immigrant students] watch out for each other. Donan will always give pencils to anybody in need, but they have each other's back. If somebody doesn't understand, they go and find somebody who can translate and make sure what they need is being translated.*

While this method of care might have been comforting for the emerging ELL students, it shifted the responsibility to understand the "condition and reality" (Swanson, 1991; 1993) from Jessica onto her bilingual students.

Being With

While I do believe that Jessica made attempts to "share feeling" (Swanson, 1991) with her students, for her immigrant students, becoming emotionally open to their reality required in-depth "commitment, concern, and personal attentiveness" (Swanson, 1993).

> *So, I try, if I say something that could be harmful, I try to reexplain to them later. Even I make mistakes. And don't hold it, you know, people are human.*

Especially for her emerging ELL students, for whom a language barrier existed, the opportunity for Jessica to express feelings of remorse did not occur.

Doing For

"Comforting the other" (Swanson, 1991; 1993) was often a responsibility that Jessica passed off onto her bilingual students. Because of the language barrier, she relied on her bilingual students to communicate with her emerging EL students, thus limiting authentic student-teacher interactions.

> *But most of them, I'll give them a hug. Most, oh you look pretty today, if I don't know how to say pretty in Spanish I'll go up to so and so, you know, one of the girls, hey, how do you say this in Spanish? And then I'll go up and tell that to Liliana. And then you see her light up.*

For specific students in the classroom, Jessica spent a tremendous amount of time and energy comforting or *doing for*; however, I did not observe her connecting with her emerging ELL students beyond a surface level of engagement.

Enabling

Jessica struggled to facilitate an environment for her emerging ELL students to "grow, heal, and/or practice self/care" (Swanson, 1991).

> *I try to be as caring as I can. Honestly, I do caring first and teaching second.*

From her perspective, Jessica cared for her students, but, from my observer's perspective, her transformation of these feelings into action was sorely lacking.

Maintaining Belief

According to Swanson (1991), maintaining belief is the final caring process in attaining the philosophical attitude of a caregiver. While Jessica established caring relationships with some of her students through shared meaning, feelings, and life experiences (Swanson, 1993), with the second-grade immigrant students in her class, she found it challenging to develop authentic, reciprocal relationships. "No matter how much a person professes to care, the result

that concerns us is the caring relation" (Noddings, 2005, p. 18). Jessica's deficit perspective impeded her ability to care for her immigrant students. Especially for her undocumented, emerging ELL students, Jessica constantly questioned their placement within her classroom as well as their academic abilities. To embrace an ethic of care, "a relation of trust must ground it. Continuity is required, because the carer in acting to confirm must know the cared-for well enough to be able to identify motives consonant with reality" (Noddings, 2005, p. 26). A lack of willingness to maintain a "hope-filled attitude" for the other prevented Jessica from embracing the other caring processes: 1) knowing, 2) being with, 3) doing for, and 4) enabling in meaningful ways.

Verónica Salinas' Para(dise) Classroom

Retelling: "Verónica's first day of school"

When Verónica arrived in mid-September of 2019, a part of me was relieved and optimistic. Along with the immigrant students, I was saddened when Daniela left Ririe Elementary to work at the junior/senior high school. For nearly 10 years, in her capacity as an ESL paraprofessional, Daniela had served as the liaison between the school and the community. Now that Daniela was no longer at Ririe Elementary, it was common to see emerging ELL student sitting quietly for hours at a time, with little to no adult interaction. It pained me to see them with their heads on their desks, excluded from their classmates and the curriculum.

Because Shelton Community School District does not have an official ESL program, Verónica's title as an ESL paraprofessional was just that: a title. With little to no guidance from the teachers and administrators, Verónica had to quickly define her new role by navigating -myriad- scenarios: from establishing relationships with students and teachers to implementing curricular decisions. Verónica's experiences as both an immigrant student and the mother of a

third-grade son informed the way she worked with and cared for her students. In the Chapter Four narrative *"Verónica's first day of school,"* as well as in the subsequent weeks that followed, she acclimated herself to her new surroundings by "engaging the "self of both" (Swanson, 1991; 1993). Although Verónica had no formal training as a paraprofessional, she relied on personal experiences to inform her professional ethic of care.

Knowing

Engaging the "self of both" is foundational to a *caregiver's* ability to truly know and center on the *cared for's* lived reality (Swanson, 1993). For Verónica, *knowing* meant striving to understand the linguistic "condition and reality" (Swanson, 1991; 1993) of her immigrant students. However, without an informed understanding of her students as learners, Verónica found herself making assumptions about their linguistic abilities (Swanson, 1991; 1993). On her first day, I was surprised when Verónica addressed a group of immigrant students in English. However, later, as we discussed how her personal experiences informed her pedagogy, Verónica's reasoning became clear.

> *When I first came here and my first group, I did ask them in English. So, I guess I do go off in English. I was like, who speaks English? and the little boys and girls would say, I do. And then I noticed the ones that wouldn't even talk. And I was like, OK. But I ask them in English because I don't want to, because sometimes we can look Hispanic and we don't even talk Spanish, like my son.*

New to the school community, Verónica was left on her own to assess her students' linguistic needs. One way in which Verónica began to establish relationships with immigrant students was by challenging the "typical ESL student" stereotypes (Vollmer, 2000). For this, Verónica relied on her experiences as a mother as an initial way of knowing.

> *They [the school] just go off of what the parents put on the paper. So, if they have Spanish, they automatically come with me. Which, OK, I get it because Spanish is*

> *their number one language, you know that's what's going on at home. But, sometimes I feel like that's not fair. Because for me, we speak Spanish and I do put that on the paper, so now I know not to put it. I put Spanish and my 9-year-old heard about that. I went out of my way to ask my son. Are you in this? And he is [ESL class]. And he tells me, I don't understand why. I don't speak Spanish. And he doesn't. He does not speak Spanish at all. So, I think it's very unfair that only a piece of paper tells you, like, where they stand, or evaluate a kid.*

During those first few weeks, Verónica came to know her students by seeking cues (Swanson, 1991; 1993) through discourse. In small group work sessions, the students would share where they were born, what languages were spoken in their homes, and, surprisingly, their family's immigration status. Through these intimate student-teacher interactions, Verónica's "willingness to recognize the other as significant beings" (Swanson, 1991) allowed for trusting relationships to develop during the early weeks of the semester.

Being With

Verónica's past experiences as an immigrant student, having attended both bilingual and monolingual schools (Hinton, 2016), informed how she cared for her students on an emotional level.

> *When I was in Chicago, my first, kindergarten, all the way to second grade, were bilingual. When I went to California, my third and fourth [grade], they were bilingual. And then when I came HERE [Indiana], it was worse, it was way different. When I came here, it was straight English. No Spanish, whatsoever, so I thought that was really like, you're done, Spanish is gone. Like Spanish, you would only speak it at home. English, you would speak it in school.*

Through shared "meaning, feelings, and experiences" (Swanson, 1993), Verónica recognized the linguistic challenges that her bilingual and emerging ELL students faced each day. She was cognizant of the fact that throughout the school day, she was the only adult who conversed with them in Spanish. Through these shared experiences, Verónica was able to establish emotional

connections with her students, as well as "convey an ongoing availability" (Swanson, 1991) of support.

For those immigrant students whose native language was English, Verónica demonstrated an authentic presence through shared feelings (Swanson, 1991). She acknowledged their struggles by encouraging them to embrace the vulnerability of learning a new language. In subsequent conversations, Verónica discussed the importance of not only students learning a second language, but teachers, as well.

> *In my fifth grade, I had one [teacher] that she was super nice, and I still recall her name because that's how nice she was. She tried. She tried talking to me in Spanish even though it wasn't her first language. She was white. She didn't have to but she gave it a try. I think we [educators] need to give it a try. If you want students to give it a try, you know, speak both languages, right, they [teachers] want them to learn English.*

Verónica's past experiences with caring teachers informed how she connected with students on an emotional level, thus laying the foundation for active engagement.

Doing For

When Verónica initially began working with her students, she selected activities and readings that informed her understanding (Swanson, 1993). During those first few weeks, she did not receive specific instructions from the classroom teachers; therefore, she designed lessons that she believed best supported her students as multi-language learners. Specifically, for bilingual students and emerging ELL students, *doing for* meant, to Verónica, "doing for the other what they would do for themselves if it were at all possible" (Swanson, 1993, p. 356). By selecting books that emphasized Spanish and English, Verónica began establishing a space in which the dignity of her students was preserved through anticipation of their needs (Swanson, 1993). Verónica saw herself as an active caregiver.

> *I think they just need more help, more patience. I mean, I try. I'm trying to help them. Interactive with the kids, helping them, not giving up on them. I'm here to teach them, to help them, I care about their education.*

Within this environment, the emerging ELL students flourished. It was clear that the students' heritage languages were valued, thus preserving the students' dignity and valuing their wholeness (Swanson, 1991;1993). By providing her students with opportunities to speak and read in both Spanish and English, Verónica was supporting their overall growth.

Enabling

Verónica consciously chose Spanish/English texts as a way of encouraging all students (e.g., native Spanish speakers, native English speakers, bilingual speakers) to practice both languages, thus eliciting "physical, cultural, spiritual, and emotional responses" (Swanson, 1993) from her students, especially native Spanish speakers. Unlike the monolingual curriculum that immigrant students were predominantly exposed to in their main classrooms, Verónica's learning environment allowed students to express themselves in their heritage language while being linguistically and emotionally supported in their emerging language. As each student read a passage from the story, Verónica guided them by "coaching, informing, and explaining" (Swanson, 1993). She was patient as she helped students pronounce difficult words in both Spanish and English. She took time to check for understanding. This *enabling* (Swanson, 1991; 1993) is crucial in facilitating students' passage through unfamiliar events, such as exposure to new content. Drawing from her own educational experiences, Verónica saw the importance of having teachers who were able to communicate in multiple languages.

> *Teachers that were bilingual; I grew up with that. It was easier for me, as a kid because I got to learn both languages at the same time. And if I needed help, there was somebody there. As a kid, I was very lucky.*

Verónica took her role as the only ESL paraprofessional quite seriously. She was able to connect with her immigrant students through shared experiences. She understood the linguistic challenges that many of them faced and was committed to supporting her students, just as she had been supported as a child.

Retelling: "Missed Opportunity"

As Verónica settled into her position as an ESL paraprofessional, I too became more comfortable in my role as a classroom-based researcher. Initially, Verónica and her students were hyperaware of my presence. She would often glance at me while I took notes. Knowing that my Spanish was quite limited, Verónica kindly translated while she worked with the emerging ELL students. While I was grateful for the individualized attention, I hoped that I would eventually blend into the background. Now, nearly 3 months into my observations, my presence was less notable. With Verónica's focus solely on her students, I began to notice small changes in her demeanor.

Now that Verónica had more time to work with students, she began to recognize the seriousness of the "condition and reality" (Swanson, 1991; 1993) of their situation. She assumed more accountability for their education, feeling responsible for preparing them for not only state testing but also the subsequent grade levels to come. Verónica became more regimented in how she prepared her students academically. In the Chapter Four narrative *"Missed Opportunity,"* the stress of attempting to meet the needs of her immigrant students began to emerge. As she attempted to "center on the one(s) cared for" (Swanson, 1991;1993), Verónica soon realized the inequities that the emerging ELL students faced.

Knowing

During the first few weeks, Verónica's *knowing* of her immigrant students grew through informal conversations based on their interests, hobbies, and families. With no established curriculum, Verónica was "free" to play educational games and read Spanish/English stories. However, as the pressures of state testing began to weigh on the classroom teachers, the "condition and reality" (Swanson, 1991; 1993) changed. Verónica's informed understanding (Swanson, 1993) of her students as learners was now dictated by the classroom teachers. Each day, as Verónica led the third-grade reading group for Linda's immigrant students, the goal was straightforward: Prepare them for the upcoming state tests that would assess their English language skills. Within these reading groups, Verónica was to reinforce the reading and writing skills that Linda had planned in her daily English language arts lessons.

> *Linda keeps me busy. She always has them doing something. And it's always, a certain homework. You have to do this, you have to get this done. [long pause] The other teachers, not so much. They're usually like, take them. I think it's horrible because I feel like I should help them on what they're doing in class, just so they know what's going on. Because if I bring them in here [Para(dise)] and I'm reading a book or doing something else that has nothing to do with the classroom or the instruction, so I think that's something that I would change if I could, but.*

While Verónica enjoyed working with her students in small groups, she also understood the importance of creating an environment that was an extension of their classroom. During the 30 minutes designated for reading groups, Verónica worked diligently to keep her students on task.

Being With

As the months continued, the tensions of being "emotionally present" (Swanson, 1991;1993) for her emerging ELL students began to show. For students like Hector, an emerging ELL and undocumented student, Verónica recognized that there was a gap in the way he was

cared for compared with his bilingual and white classmates. For Verónica, *being with* meant simply being there for Hector and the other emerging ELL students (Swanson, 1991;1993).

> *There's nobody there for them and I don't blame them. They know that I'm here for them. They know that I'm here to teach them, to help them. I care about their education. I feel like if you have a big classroom, you can't really show them that because you're teaching a whole bunch of kids. So, they have to get with it, or, you know. And I think that happens to everybody, when you're in school. You're with it. And you know, some kids are embarrassed to ask, and I feel like when we're in small groups, they know, oh she cares. She's going to help me if I do understand or I don't understand. I think being in a group just shows them that you're there for them.*

Verónica was aware that the language barrier was directly affecting Hector's performance in Linda's class. She demonstrated care by "becoming emotionally open to the other's reality" (Swanson, 1991, p. 163). Each afternoon, she met with Hector for additional support, which included English lessons and math homework help. However, during reading groups in which Verónica would have a range of ELL students, at times she struggled to meet the individual needs of all her pupils. By mid-semester, it was evident that Verónica was feeling the pressure of working with and caring for all of the immigrant students at Ririe Elementary.

Doing For

As Verónica's role began to shift toward test preparation, she found herself constrained by time. Her time and focus were split. She would often look at the clock several times, concerned with the completion or the quality of an assignment. The length of the story and the number of short-answer questions often determined the type of interaction Verónica had with her students. As the testing dates drew closer, it was not uncommon to see Hector copying assignments down in English without receiving an explanation in Spanish. Verónica simply did not have the time to translate the English stories into Spanish. Hector, like so many of the emerging ELL students at Ririe, was falling behind his classmates. The care she could provide to

Hector was one of "doing for the other what they would do for themselves if it were at all possible" (Swanson, 1991, p. 164). For Verónica, she never gave up on Hector, as she continued to provide support.

> *Because, the math, he wasn't doing it. I told her, let me help him how to do it. He knows math now. I showed him tricks. I was like, this is how you do it and now he does it. Now, she lets him do it. I'm like if you let me help them, they can, they'll learn and when you do it again, you don't have to exclude him. They can be included in the homework.*

Verónica was aware that Hector, like so many emerging ELL students, was navigating two worlds. The pressures of performing in Linda's class were often challenging for Hector because of the English language barrier. Therefore, during reading groups, Verónica would do her best to translate the main ideas of the story and make sure that Hector was recording the correct answers in English. Additionally, when she met one-on-one and in small groups with Hector and the other emerging ELL students, she would focus on their strengths. For Hector, this meant encouraging him with his new math skills.

Enabling

Outside of the reading groups, Verónica worked with Hector one-on-one. During this time, it was evident that Verónica was attentive to the reality that Hector often felt alone in school. Not only did she schedule extra time with Hector, as a way of "assuring the other's long term well-being" (Swanson, 1993), she was concerned and committed to providing Hector with additional support to "facilitate the other's capacity to grow, heal, and/or practice self-care" (1991).

> *Honestly, as learners, they try really hard. They don't give up, even though English is very hard for them. I just feel as learners, they're great, they're amazing.*

As previously mentioned, Margaret's comment to Verónica was difficult to hear, and I was fortunate to speak with Verónica about that incident. From our conversations, it was clear that Verónica valued her students as bilingual and multilingual learners, yet she realized that she had not been explicit in vocalizing their linguistic value to them. While I maintain that Verónica missed an opportunity by not addressing Margaret's comments about native Spanish speakers, I do not believe that her response came from a place of malice. I also believe that Margaret's comment may speak to a greater issue: teachers relying on bilingual students to support emerging ELL students in the classroom. Often during in-class instruction, Linda would ask her bilingual students to serve as the linguistic and cultural liaison between herself and Hector.

Retelling: "You shouldn't have"

In many ways, I sympathized with Verónica. As a 6th–12th-grade teacher for 10 years, I had taught in three different states, for five school districts, and in multiple settings (e.g., parochial, charter, alternative, public). It takes time to acclimate to a new school and begin to build relationships with students, staff members, and families. Not only was she new to the school community, but Verónica was also training to become a nurse, not a teacher. And while nursing and teaching share several attributes, especially in terms of care, for Verónica, every new experience required careful navigation. Although she was expected to test all the immigrant students multiple times throughout the year, Verónica was given little to no guidance in how best to do this by the teachers and administration.

Verónica and the classroom teachers struggled to build relationships with one another. Ririe Elementary took an interesting approach to the role of a paraprofessional. Because of contractual obligations, monthly meetings for teachers were separate from those for

paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals were considered "aides" who would float between classrooms and were not part of the conversations regarding curriculum. Often, it appeared that the role of the "para" was to serve as another adult in the room.

My own experience was quite different. After my third year of teaching, I moved to Pennsylvania. Unable to find a teaching position, I took a job as a paraprofessional at an urban charter school. In addition to the State of Pennsylvania requiring a rigorous standard of quality for paraprofessionals, the school itself promoted an inclusive and equitable partnership between teachers and support staff.

For Verónica, brief interactions with the teachers of Ririe occurred when she was either picking up or dropping off a group of immigrant students. She was not part of the planning of curriculum; therefore, she often relied on her students, or in some cases, me, to fill her in on their assignments. In the Chapter Four narrative *"You shouldn't have,"* I truly felt for Verónica. While she accepted the position because she wanted to help the immigrant students and families of Ririe, with little support and guidance from her colleagues, ultimately, the immigrant students suffered.

Knowing

Verónica often found herself in situations in which the expectations were not clearly stated. To center on the needs of her students, Verónica would rely on cues to understand the personal reality of her students (Swanson, 1991;1993). Often, these cues took the form of asking students how testing procedures had been administered in the past or making assumptions about best practices.

> *They break down. Like Hector, he wants to learn but it is so frustrating for him because he didn't understand. He knew exactly what to do and he just, like the language barrier, it was very hard for him.*

From conversations with her students, Verónica was quite aware of the testing anxiety that many of her emerging ELL students faced. To "engage the self of both" (Swanson, 1991), Verónica believed that by translating the tests for her students, she was providing care that centered on their specific linguistic needs.

Being With

As a way of recognizing her students' experiences, for Verónica, *being with* involved conveying an emotional presence (Swanson, 1991;1993). Verónica was concerned that some of her students were placed at an unfair advantage by taking a test in English, rather than in their heritage language.

> *I think some teachers are really hard on them. They think, they just don't understand. I feel like some of them [teachers] put themselves in their [emerging ELL students'] shoes. They're like, the language barrier. They [teachers] see them [emerging ELL students] and are like, if they knew English, they would be a great student. But others, they're just like, no, he's not even trying. I think kids, even if you explain it to them in English and they don't understand, or maybe they do understand, but they don't know how to tell you. I feel like it's just very hard to explain to them in your language. It's just really hard.*

From Verónica's perspective, instead of valuing students' language abilities as an asset, standardized testing was another example of structural inequalities (Schissel, 2019) within public education.

Doing For

As a way of supporting her emerging ELL students, for Verónica, care meant "doing for the other what they would do for themselves if it were at all possible" (Swanson, 1991, p. 163). From her perspective, it was logical to translate the test for her students from English into

Spanish. As the ESL paraprofessional, Verónica believed that her role was to comfort the students from "undo harm and ultimately preserving their dignity" (Swanson, 1991, p. 164). When she learned that the test was invalid because she had translated for her students, Verónica was embarrassed and ashamed; her intentions were not malicious, rather, she was unaware of the testing procedures. No one had told her.

I am concerned because education is big. Education is very important.

As the months went by, Verónica's responsibilities as an ESL paraprofessional grew. At the end of October, in addition to her normal duties of working with immigrant students, during parent-teacher conferences, she served as a translator.

> *I have never talked so much in my life. It was bad. OK, so, obviously the conferences they went good because every parent, like you know, we were able to communicate and were able to understand one another, and it was good, in that part. But there was not enough communication between me and the teachers. Because they [the conferences] all overlapped. All of the conferences. And some, I didn't even get to. When I was in one classroom, the other person [family] was already here. I told the secretary, 'I'm sorry.' I got the schedule on the day of the conferences. I even told Mr. Foley [the principal], 'I don't know which classroom I'm supposed to go to. I don't have the schedule.' But Linda [third grade] and Jessica [second grade], that's the only classrooms I have. He's like, how do you not have the schedule? Well, I guess I was like, I guess you don't need me. But yeah, besides that, besides the fact that we didn't communicate, conferences were good.*

While she was proud that she was able to support her immigrant students and families during parent-teacher conferences, Verónica also felt guilty for not being there for all of her students. Overall, as the semester continued, Verónica found herself struggling to support the 40% of Ririe's population that identified as Hispanic. While she remained focused on anticipating their needs (Swanson, 1991; 1993), she began to feel constrained by the realities of being the only ESL paraprofessional.

Enabling

Verónica's lack of communication with the teaching staff had a direct impact on the care that she provided to her immigrant students. For Verónica, *enabling* (Swanson, 1991; 1993) often presented itself in the form of providing linguistic assistance to immigrant students and families. By presenting her "expert knowledge to the betterment of the other" (Swanson, 1991, p. 164), she attempted to build a bridge between the classroom teachers and the students and their families.

Overall, Verónica was concerned with how students felt about testing. To develop a reciprocal relationship with her students and as a way of "validating their reality" (Swanson, 1993), she was upfront and honest with her students; they often wondered why they were being pulled out of class to be tested.

> *I don't exclude them from that information. I told them, I don't know whether I was supposed to tell them, I don't know if I was right to tell them, but I actually, like when they started testing with me, they would ask me, 'Why are we taking this test?' and of course, I didn't say, 'You're dumb.' I was just, oh, you're taking this test because you have two languages. You know, you know English and you know Spanish. So, they kind of want to track where you're at. I don't tell them anything bad, I'm just, you're a smart one, in two languages. When I told them, because they did ask me, they're like, why are we taking this test? Why aren't THEY [white students] taking the test? And I did say, they're not taking it because they passed the test. I was like, once, you know both languages on point, that's when you're going to stop. I was like, you have to give it your all. Because, I've noticed some kids, like just like click [on random answers on the computerized test], and I don't think they ever knew what that test was for. So, they would just click on. And I told them, like this test is to evaluate where you guys are on, where your English is at. If you guys do good, you guys are like out, like you guys are done, but and some are like, if we pass it we're not going to be with you. I'm just like, what if some of them are doing that [randomly clicking] to just stay with me?*

By explaining the reasoning behind the testing, Verónica hoped that her students would take the testing seriously. Additionally, as a way of "facilitating the other's capacity to grow, heal, and/or

practice self-care" (Swanson, 1991, p. 164), Verónica believed that honest discourse was needed as a way of countering the feelings of "othering" that her students faced.

Retelling: "It's necessary"

During the spring semester, Verónica began making curricular decisions for her emerging ELL students. Without consulting their classroom teachers, Verónica assigned Hector, Inès, and Marcos extra English practice. Although my background is in English language arts, I was never trained to teach students to read. As I made note of the various methods of instruction that Verónica was using to teach reading, I quickly realized that Verónica's reading strategies were not based on research but rather on what she considered "best practices."

Witnessing Hector break down in front of Verónica and his classmates was difficult to watch. Both Linda and Verónica had shared with me that throughout the school year, Hector would break down when he was sad or frustrated. I often wondered how Hector's life experiences as an undocumented child from Honduras affected his schooling. In the Chapter Four narrative *"It's necessary,"* for the first time during my observations, I was surprised when Verónica assumed a "tough love" approach to Hector's reality.

Knowing

As I observed Verónica working with a variety of immigrant students (e.g., native English speakers, bilingual learners, emerging ELL students), I found that while *knowing* included "content of the physical cultural, spiritual, and emotional responses" (Swanson, 1993), ultimately, there existed a tension between "striving to understand the other as a significant being" while addressing the reality of the situation.

> *I could put myself in their shoes. Because they would tell me a lot, my parents, you know, I think, they would always tell me stories. I think they had trust in me. Like, oh my parents, when we go out, they tell me, translate this for me. Do this, you know? Or in school, sometimes they're like, I don't know what this means. And I think I could put myself in their shoes, and be like, oh, I have that sometimes. You know? I have to think before doing stuff, or I have to think twice about something. So, yeah, I think a lot of my students did remind me of myself when I was in school. Still to this day, I think back and I'm like, oh, that was me. And that's why I think I have, I feel good to be there for them because if I could, if I could go back to school, I wish there was somebody there for me too. So, I'm happy that there was somebody there for me, so I'm glad that I can be there for somebody else. I'm glad that I can be there for them.*

For Verónica, knowing existed within two worlds. For her students outside of the classroom, she could relate to their cultural and linguistic heritage. However, within the classroom, she knew that at Ririe Elementary, students were expected to assimilate.

Being With

I spent nearly 7 months watching Verónica work with Hector in multiple settings (e.g., third-grade classroom, one-on-one, and small group instruction). She genuinely cared for him, and we spoke about Hector's situation quite often. As a way of *being with* her students, especially Hector, she saw herself as an advocate.

> *I think I have a lot of patience with kids. And I think they see it. And when I don't, I think they can pull it out and say, oh she's getting frustrated, you know. I think I don't get frustrated when they don't know stuff. I don't get frustrated in that case, because it happens. They're growing up, they're learning. I get frustrated when I have kids that don't care to learn. I think it's, with me and the kids in general, I'm not bad, I'm not mean, or I won't lose my temper, my patience, like that. If they're doing bad, I won't lose my patience or when they're fighting, I won't, I'll be calm, I'll be the calm one. But, having the kids that just don't care to learn, I think, I'm trying to help you. Sometimes I even tell them, I'm not the bad one here, I'm trying to help you. And you know, sometimes they say bad stuff about themselves and I tell them, no, you know, I try to switch it around and tell them, you're not like that, you choose to be like that, but you're not like that, which I think, if I could be a friend as well, then they can see me like that.*

By telling Hector that his homework was "necessary," I don't believe Verónica was trying to distance herself from the situation. Rather, because she was telling him how he needed to behave, it meant more. Unlike his white teachers, she understood what his reality was and wanted him to be successful.

Doing For

Doing for seemed to manifest itself as tough love. On the one hand, Verónica wanted to display a reciprocal relationship. By crouching down to Hector's level and attempting to comfort him, she was protecting him from difficulties and anticipating his needs.

> *I give a lot of hugs. I love hugs. I just think hugs are the best thing for everything. Even for the ones that do not hug, I'll be like, hug it out with me. And they do hug it out with me, which makes me feel good. 'Cause I'm like, I got a hug out of him. He would never do that. So, giving hugs, and oh, I do this and I've done it, I think I learned this because I worked in a retirement home. Which, I go to their level, their eye level. Which, I'm not taller than you, I'm not bigger than you. I am the same as you. You know, I go down, I will kneel down or I will bend over. So, I think that's, I always learned, don't stand over them because it makes them feel like, you're bigger, it's SCARY. Imagine being with someone big. Like, it's scary. And I learned that, I've always worked with people, so I think I've gotten how people want to be treated. You know, how it makes them feel better. Like, I think, touch, it's very good because you make them know like, hey, I'm here, I understand, and then going down to their eye level makes them feel like, we're the same. You're not bigger than me, you're not that scary now.*

Hector was visibly upset, and therefore, Verónica took it upon herself to comfort him. "Protecting the other from undo harm and ultimately preserving the dignity of the one done for" (Swanson, 1991, p. 163). While Verónica's words appeared cold and distant, her actions were quite the opposite.

Enabling

But her words, "It's necessary" and "He's making excuses," speak to a larger issue. To prepare Hector for "long-term well-being," Verónica needed to provide him with the armor necessary to protect himself.

> *I just treat them the way I would want my kid to get treated. So, I don't want my kid to be treated like, I don't care about you. I just feel like, he tells me too, this teacher helped me and I learned it. And sometimes he [Verónica's son] tells me, I don't understand it. And I'm just like, you know, sometimes that does happen and like we teach but they don't understand, but they don't want to speak up, because everybody else got it. So, I make sure that I treat all of them equal. Yeah, so, I think I'm OK.*

Unlike Verónica's own schooling experiences, Ririe Elementary did not support bilingual education. Immigrant students were expected to learn English quickly to assimilate into the monolingual classroom and curriculum. Verónica's "expert knowledge to the betterment of the other" (Swanson, 1991) was her way of protecting Hector from the harsh realities of school.

Maintaining Belief

According to Swanson (1991), maintaining belief involves "holding the other in esteem and believing in them" (p. 165). Based on our informal and formal conversations, as well as on my observations, it was clear that Verónica fundamentally believed in her students as learners and human beings. From those first early interactions with her students, Verónica's lived experiences as both an immigrant student and the mother of an immigrant child guided her actions. Noddings (2005) posits that "a caring relation is, in its most basic form, a connection or encounter between two human beings - a carer and a recipient of care, or cared for. For the relation to be properly called caring, both parties must contribute to it in characteristic ways" (p. 15). Although Verónica lacked the formal educational training to support immigrant students'

linguistic needs, she maintained a "hope-filled attitude" (Swanson, 1991) as she strived to build reciprocal relationships with her students. Especially for Ririe Elementary's emerging ELL students, Verónica sought to establish a base of caring by defining what mattered most (Swanson, 1993).

> *Education is very important. I had a teacher that asked me about what was going on with me. And, I think, patience. Like if I didn't get something, you know, they would have patience. I had a lot of teachers who cared for me. They were just, super. Motivating them to do better because I know I had a couple of teachers, like, sometimes I would be like, I just can't do it and I give up. And they would sit down, that patience comes in, because they sit down and they teach you and then they motivate you to, you can do it. I think I got that from them. From one teacher, because when you say I can't, I feel like that sticks to you and you're like, I can't. So, for my son, in my family, you can't say, I can't. Like you need to try. So, I think one teacher taught me that and it stuck to me.*

As a way of addressing care, Verónica sought out opportunities to be authentically present in the lives of her students by listening and being with them in their moments of need.

> *I can tell when something is wrong. I can tell when they're serious and I'm just like, something is wrong. And you know what, I actually made one cry because I said, 'Is something's wrong? What's wrong with you?' and tears just started pouring. And she's like, 'Yeah, something is wrong.' I told her, yeah, we can talk about it, afterwards, by ourselves. And we did. I took her out to the hall and we both sat down. I sat with her, I SIT with the kids. Which sometimes, I'm like, maybe I'm just too childish because I never see teachers sit down with kids. I actually will sit on the floor. So, I sat with her and she cried. I helped her, I told her, you know, stuff happens but have faith. And, you know, think positive. You know, which I think made her feel, even though I couldn't do anything for her. You know, and I think that's the thing, we don't ask kids, we just go on with our day, we don't ask, how are you? Are you OK? I think I can read kids. I think I'm doing something right.*

From observing Verónica, it was clear that she strived to be *in relation* with her students. Noddings (2012) argued that "in order to respond to a genuine carer, one does have to empty the soul of its own contents." (p. 17).

In this chapter, I discussed how I transitioned from field texts to research texts, grounding my understanding of rural educators' experiences with Latinx immigrant students, using Swanson's Middle Range Theory of Caring (1991, 1993). In the next chapter, as I continue to make meaning of those experiences, I once again reposition my field notes, researcher journals, and transcribed interviews, but this time in the form of imagined *relivings*. Embracing narrative form, in Chapter Six, you are invited to the play, *Step Out of Doors,* for imagined kitchen-table conversations with my participants, leading scholars in the field of education, and community members.

CHAPTER SIX. STEP OUT OF DOORS

Author's Note

In this chapter, I invite you, the reader, into my home, around my kitchen table, for imagined conversations that take the form of *relivings*. My participants' words are their own, unaltered and borrowed from transcribed interviews, and their physical expressions are based on interactions during face-to-face interviews and classroom observations. In addition to my participants' presence at the table, I have invited educational theorists to engage in "everyday talk" (Kohl & McCutcheon, 2015) as I continue to make meaning of how my participants work with and care for Latinx immigrant students. It is important to note that the words of Dr. Noddings and Dr. Gay have been paraphrased from their research on care theories.[15] The following imagined conversations explore the vulnerability that exists in narrative inquiry.

Entrance

Whoever you are: step out of doors tonight,
Out of the room that lets you feel secure.
Infinity is open to your sight.

—Dana Gioia[16]

[15] The following paraphrased text are cited from Noddings (2013) and Gay (2018) and will appear under References.
[16] The following is an except from the poem *Entrance*, Dana Gioia. See References for the citation of the original publication.

Step Out of Doors

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Stephanie Oudghiri: Narrator, former 6th–12th grade social studies and English language arts teacher, emerging qualitative researcher, and community member. Hostess of the kitchen table conversations.

Anne Weiss: Stephanie's mother-in-law and initial gatekeeper into the community of Ririe, Indiana.

Linda Welch: Current third-grade teacher at Ririe Elementary School.

Jessica Reed: Current second-grade teacher at Ririe Elementary School.

Verónica Salinas: Current ESL paraprofessional at Ririe Elementary School.

Daniela Pérez: Former ESL paraprofessional at Ririe Elementary School and sister to Emilia.

Emilia Pérez: Former ESL paraprofessional at Ririe Elementary School and sister to Daniela.

Hermila Sanz: Former undocumented immigrant from Mexico, who emigrated to the United States from Mexico as a child. Currently a community organizer and activist in the Midwest and friend to Stephanie.

Geneva Gay: Professor of Education at the University of Washington–Seattle, whose scholarship focuses on multicultural education, best known for her work on *Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices.*

Nel Noddings: Professor Emerita at Stanford University, feminist, and philosopher in the United States, best known for her work on caring in education.

The action of the play takes place in Ririe, Indiana, a small farming community, sometime after the COVID-19 pandemic. It is the beginning of summer, and the setting is Stephanie's kitchen.

ACT I

Scene I: Saturday afternoon.

Scene II: Sunday afternoon, the next day.

ACT II

Scene I: Saturday afternoon, a week later.

Scene II: Sunday afternoon, the next day.

Scene III: Saturday afternoon, a few weeks later.

ACT III

Evening, the same day.

ACT I

SCENE I

Time: *Saturday afternoon.*

At rise: The modest furnishings of the family's combined kitchen and dining area match the overall décor of the home. The white ceramic farmhouse sink is illuminated by the sunlight pouring in from the kitchen window. The walnut cabinets are stained to match the natural wooden plank floorboards. A decorative hand towel hangs from the oven door handle, adding a pop of color; teals and yellows add to the warmth of the room. The rooms are divided by a small island that stands three feet high. Made from solid oak, the kitchen island is topped with a snow-gray quartz composite countertop that mimics the look of stone. Nestled against either side of the island are two swivel counter stools made from wood and metal. In the dining area, a cream-colored cotton tablecloth decorated with pink flowers and greenery covers a rustic, round oak table. Four place settings have been prepared for the forthcoming guests. At the center of the table, an antique milk glass vase holds pink and white peonies, which add a sweet, peaceful floral note to the air. The walls, painted a muted taupe, display framed landscapes of country barns. While the two rooms are relatively small, the home is warm and inviting.

At left, a hallway leads to the laundry room, Stephanie's office, and a spare bedroom. At right, opposite, is a breezeway and adjoining bedroom. At the end of the breezeway, Charlie, the Yorkshire terrier, is curled up on a woven coir doormat displaying the word "Welcome" in black lettering. As he lies at the back door, his snoring is slightly muffled by the sound of a percolating coffee pot. As the oven clock displays 12:06 p.m. At left, Stephanie enters from the laundry room and walks to the center. Glancing at the clock, she turns and peers out the kitchen window, makes an audible sigh, and shakes her head. She grabs a few napkins from the cabinet above the microwave and places them at each place setting at the kitchen table. Stephanie is in her early 40s. Her long dark hair has been pulled up into a high ponytail. As she begins quietly pacing the kitchen, she hears the crackling of gravel under a car's tires. As Charlie begins barking, Stephanie walks past the dining room table and stands at the back door. Scooping Charlie up into her arms, Anne opens the door.

Stephanie Hi. I was getting worried you weren't gonna make it. (*She places CHARLIE on the floor and walks toward the kitchen area.)*

Anne Hi, Charlie. (*ANNE, STEPHANIE'S mother-in-law, a woman in her early 70s, enters the house. Smiling at the dog, she places a white box on the kitchen table.)* Sorry, I'm late. I ran into Judy at the bakery, and she was telling me all about her sister's gallbladder surgery. (*sighing*) It's always something.

Stephanie That's fine. I made cranberry scones this morning, just in case you weren't able to get the mini Bundt cakes. (*She walks over to the box, sets it on the kitchen island, and lifts the lid of the box.* What do I owe ya?

Anne (*Shaking her head*) You owe me nothing. Happy to help. Oh, I see you put out the Blue Bay pattern. (g*lancing at the porcelain dinner plates*) Pretty!

Stephanie They're too large for dessert but I didn't want to use paper plates. (*laughing*)

Anne Are you nervous about today? (*pulls out a swivel stool and sits down*)

Stephanie (*long pause*) No, but I'm glad that everyone agreed to meet here. There's something less formal about chatting around a kitchen table, more intimate, you know? Since my classroom observations ended, there's so much that I've been thinking about.

Anne I'd imagine so. (*glancing at the clock*) What time will they be here?

Stephanie Well, Verónica couldn't come today, so it'll just be Linda and Jessica. I invited them over for coffee at one o'clock. (*CHARLIE begins to bark.*) Looks like somebody's here. (*peeking out the kitchen window*) I think it's Linda. Doesn't she drive a Traverse?

Anne (*Stands up, walks to the back door, and picks up CHARLIE*) Yep, that's Linda. I will just say a quick hello and then be on my way.

Stephanie (*Peering out the kitchen window, she watches Linda open the car door.*) You're welcome to stay.

Anne (*smiling, opens the back door for Linda*) Hi Linda. How've ya been?

Linda (*Entering the breezeway, LINDA, a white woman in her mid-fifties, gives a quick pet to CHARLIE'S head and proceeds toward the dining area*.) I'm good. Happy that summer break is finally here. (*glancing around the room*) Stephanie, your house is so cute. (*pausing*) You know, I've never been here before.

Stephanie (*to Linda*) you. We like it. Please have a seat. (*pulls out a chair from around the kitchen table*) Can I get you coffee or tea?

Linda Coffee, please. Cream, no sugar. Thanks. (*hangs her purse on the back of the chair*)

Anne Well, I'm guessing you girls have a bunch to talk about, so I'll get out of your hair. (*turning to Stephanie*) If you need something, just text. (*walks toward the backdoor and pauses*) Take care, Linda. (*She exits.*)

Linda (*waving her hand*) You too, Anne.

Stephanie (*Walks to the refrigerator for creamer, then grabs a coffee mug from the kitchen island and hands it to LINDA.) Setting the creamer in front of LINDA, she pours the coffee. After placing the coffee pot on the warming station, Stephanie sits at the kitchen table.)* Thanks for coming today. How's your summer treating you so far?

Linda Good. My daughter took a new job in Chicago, so I've been helping her pack.

Stephanie That's nice of you. Packing can be such a pain. What else have you been up to? (*smiling*) I know that all last year, you were trying to figure out all of the technology for e-learning.

Linda Yeah. And they're going to want us to do that in the future and I don't know how to do that stuff, so. (*sighing*) Yes, it's a learning curve for me. (*chuckles*) I'm going for walks every day to just get myself out of the house. So, just taking it day-by-day.

Stephanie (*nodding her head*) I try to go for a walk every day. I like to visit Wayne's cows. Since you live in town, I don't imagine you see much livestock. (*laughs*) Do you see any of your students in the summer? (*grinning*)

Linda I see the neighborhood kids quite a bit and they wave at me as I walk by, but other than that, that's it.

(*The sound of CHARLIE's barking fills the room.*)

Stephanie (*Standing up, she walks to the kitchen window.*) Jessica must be here. Who needs a doorbell when you have a Yorkie? (*rolls eyes and shakes her head*)

Linda He's just excited that more company has arrived. (*laughs*)

Stephanie (*Walks to the back door, stands in front of the screen door and waves. Then turns and walks back toward the kitchen island to grab a coffee mug.*)

Jessica (*Entering the house, she walks toward the dining area.)* Hey, sorry I'm late. The babysitter was running behind schedule. (*Looking at CHARLIE*) My cats would have a field day with you. (*Laughing, she pulls out a chair from the table.*) Hi, Linda. How've you been?

Linda I'm good. Glad that summer is finally here.

Stephanie Jessica, would you like coffee or tea? (*pointing to the coffee maker and tea bags on the kitchen counter*)

Jessica Oh, I like that Dunkin' Donuts French Vanilla. I'll have that. (*pointing to the ground coffee bag sitting next to the coffee pot*) Thanks.

Stephanie It's my fave. (*She pours two cups of coffee and walks toward the kitchen table.*)

Stephanie (*Handing JESSICA a coffee mug, she pulls out a chair and sits down.*) Thank you both, again, for being here today. I appreciate it. Verónica couldn't make it today, but she'll be here tomorrow.

Jessica Sure, no problem.

Linda Glad to be helpful.

Stephanie Thanks. I enjoyed my time at Ririe. You know, the kids are hilarious and the hugs, oh the hugs. (*smiling*) I just loved being in an elementary school, it's so (*pausing*) active. So, since leaving Ririe, I've had lots of time to think about our conversations and what I observed during my classroom visits. One thing that stood out to me was the difference…, (*hesitating*) I don't mean types of students but I guess, the differences I noticed between the emerging ELL students and the other immigrant students, (*hesitating*) if that makes sense?

Linda Do you mean the migrants?

Stephanie Well, that's just it (*pausing*), are these students considered migrants? Aren't their families employed at Levi's dairy farms? Oh, and the pig farms?

Linda Recently, most of them have stayed. We'd go through a period where a lot of them were migrant workers, and they would be here for just a few months, go somewhere else, and then come back the next spring, maybe for a while. But, recently, most of them have been pretty stable. They're working, their parents are working at the dairy, so it's not a migrant-type of job.

Stephanie So, I'd imagine that because the immigrant families are staying in the community, putting down roots, the way you've both taught has changed?

Jessica But, it depends on who they are. This is the most migrant class that I've had with them. Most of the Hispanic kids that I've had have stayed put.

Stephanie So, when you say (*making air quotes with her fingers*) "migrant," you both are talking about your undocumented students?

Linda (*nods her head in agreement*)

Stephanie (*To LINDA*) When I was observing, you had one undocumented student, Hector. (*to JESSICA*) And you had four undocumented students–Esteban, Liliana, Inès, and Marcos.

Jessica Yep. (*LINDA nods her head.*)

Stephanie I noticed during class observations, the way you both interacted with immigrant students differed? Why was that? (*begins slicing the Bundt cake*)

Jessica Testing. (*sighs*) It's harder. Math is where I succeed, nine times out of 10. I can, I can get through to them in math.

Stephanie (*To JESSICA*) Would you like a piece? (*gesturing to the cake*)

Jessica Yeah, thanks.

Linda I agree. I know they feel lost and frustrated. So, I try to find what they can do, like Hector, he's good at math. He's not a bad reader in Spanish, either, but I would just have him do the problems that didn't have the words. Just do these and he would do those, and he'd be successful.

Jessica Reading is different. So many different languages because of how the grammar is and how it's different. And, I mean, it's just, and trying to get reading across anyway, and that's why I have them on that new iRead program. I was pushing that, especially with those lower four. It's the only way that I could teach them because I didn't have time for one-on-one. I feel like I'm neglecting them, but I can't neglect the rest of my other students. (*takes a sip of coffee*)

Stephanie I guess I'm struggling with the idea that they're considered low because their first language is Spanish and not English. (*pausing*) I get what you're saying. There's so much that a teacher is responsible for—testing, state standards—but don't we have a responsibility to care for all of our students? I mean, what about your undocumented students? Is your approach to care with them different from the other kids in the class?

(*To LINDA*) Would you like some cake?

Linda Yes, please. (*smiles*)

Jessica No, care is the same. I mean, yes, my ESL kids do need more, but care is care.

Stephanie (*sipping her coffee*) I'm glad that Dr. Gay and Dr. Noddings have agreed to meet with us in a few weeks to discuss caring for ethnically diverse students.

Linda Gosh. (*Looking at STEPHANIE*) I remember when you asked me to define care. I kept thinking, that's hard because there's so many different ways to care.

Stephanie Yeah. I was interested in how you all defined care.

Linda And when I think about my bilingual students, (*pausing*) especially in this day and age of test, test, test, test. (*taking a deep breath, she pushes her lemon Bundt cake around with her fork*)

Stephanie I remember the day you passed back a graded language arts exam and Elena was in tears because she got an F. She was so upset. (*gives a sympathetic look toward LINDA who is nodding her head in agreement*) I remember you said, "It's just one test. In China, they take tests every week."

Linda (*a look of embarrassment overtakes her face*) I was frustrated. I find them getting angry with me because I'm asking too much of them. And so, sometimes we will just talk and say, I know this is hard, I know that some of this is maybe more than you can handle and you know, I'm sorry about that, but it's not me making these decisions, and we're going to work together to just do the best that we can do. And we just don't have the test, like our Pivot tests, that kind of lets us know where they stand, getting ready for that test and so, we're doing those several times a year and then we have just our normal classroom tests and, you know, they look at you and go, another test? But, it's just where we are right now. (*sighing*)

Stephanie Third grade is high stakes, with all of the testing. Not that second grade isn't. (*glancing at JESSICA*)

Jessica No, third grade is a whole other, that's why I didn't want to teach third grade because of how high stakes it is. I can't handle that stress. I've done it. I don't want to do it.

Stephanie So, just to preview our talk with Dr. Gay and Dr. Noddings (*pausing*), they both discuss caring as active. Can either of you think about what that might have looked like in your classrooms?

Linda (*laughing*) I'm trying to think. Well, I know, I mean, all the way back, through my career, I mean, there've been times when like, kids didn't have shoes, so you try to find them some shoes, or they don't have a coat, or you know, you try to meet those needs, or I keep hats and gloves here for the ones that don't have them. Or, you know, that's one kind of caring. For their physical needs.

Stephanie Are you talking about all of your students?

Linda Yes. When I think about caring, I think about their home life. There have been several times where I've sat down with a student privately and said, I know things aren't good at home, I know that you're struggling at home, but school is your second home and so when you come through those doors, you can leave all of that

behind and we start fresh every morning and, you know, we're going to work on it together. I remember a couple of years ago when a student was talking to the principal, later about something, an issue that they had, and she was like, "I know, I need to leave all of that at the door." (*glowing*) And that made me feel so good because they remembered what I had said.

Stephanie Would either of you like more coffee?

Linda Sure, but I can get it. (*Standing up, she walks to the coffee pot and pours a cup*).

Jessica Most of 'em, crave, do crave affection and touch because they don't get it at home. Or even the communication. They don't get that at home.

Stephanie That's another interesting point. (*hesitating*) But how do you know what their home life is like? Do we know or are we making assumptions?

Jessica (*looks at LINDA*)

Stephanie So, thinking about your immigrant students, what does care look like in your classroom? How is it active?

Jessica When it boils down to it, care is care. But there's one undocumented student who's gone now (*shaking her head*), but no amount of caring would have affected him.

Stephanie Hmm. I want to come back to this idea of students not caring. I mean, I've never taught elementary school students, but I often wonder when students aren't engaged, is it right to blame the students? Or is there something bigger going on?

Jessica Don't get me wrong. I spend time to get to know them enough to where the incentives spark their interest to keep them wanting to learn. So, that's why I do the shop day. I get to know them enough.

Stephanie But that's for all of your students, right? What about your immigrant students?

Jessica They watch out for each other. Mateo will always give pencils to anybody in need, but they have each other's back. If somebody doesn't understand, they go and find somebody who can translate and make sure what they need is being translated.

(*Standing up, she walks to the coffee pot for another cup*).

Stephanie Yeah, I noticed during classroom observations that you both relied on the bilingual students to communicate with the emerging ELL students.

Linda In the beginning, they were essential. Hector couldn't speak any English and I couldn't speak Spanish. He would get so upset and say, 'I don't speak English' in Spanish. (*laughing*) I could get the English. And he'd get really frustrated, so they were great then, but then they kind of started the group mother hen, you know?

Stephanie Yes. I remember the six girls taking turns with Hector. (*turning to JESSICA*) Jessica, how did you communicate with your four emerging ELL students?

(*sitting back down at the table*)

Jessica If they had a question, they'd come up to me, or raise their hand and I had to use Google Translate a lot and that's how we communicated, so, if they didn't understand what I needed them to do, I wouldn't use Google Translate. The expectation that was hard to get across was, if you have a question about something, don't just sit there. Poor Liliana, that's how she, or Inès, depending on whether she wanted to work or not, they'd just sit there and do nothing.

Stephanie I know technology can be challenging. But do you feel that you were successful with your immigrant students?

Jessica Hmm (*pausing*), that's a good question. I mean, I learned more Spanish through them, then I was able to. I may not be able to speak it, but I understood more of what they were saying, so then I was able to help them further. If they were able to say it in Spanish and use it in a sentence, I tried to use it in Google Translate, at first, a lot. But, if they talked too fast, I'm screwed. (*laughing*) I mean, at least, I was able to pick up a few words and they saw that I understood.

Stephanie But, how did you know they understood?

Jessica I may not be able to speak it in Spanish, but I already knew some numbers and they knew that. Anything with numbers (*pausing*) what was it, they were trying to do skip counting. And I wasn't understanding and when they started doing the numbers in Spanish, and I realized quickly that it was numbers. So, it was just a way of, I was able to figure out the pattern and say, oh yeah. Instead of by twos, it was by tens, or by fifteens, or whatever it was.

Linda It was huge for us when Verónica was hired to replace Daniela. Hector had so many needs. The kids are all different, because you will have some kids that will come in and they're just, motivated and everybody else is speaking English, and I want to learn English, and they work really hard. Hector is one that would shut down instead of being more motivated. He got depressed and sad and so he was harder to help because you know, he just kind of shut down. And one day he was crying and the girls asked him what was wrong and he was just sad because he couldn't talk to his friends.

Stephanie I'm sure Hector has been through a lot. That is why I'm so grateful that Hermila is coming to share her experiences as a former undocumented student. (*looking at LINDA*) How did it make you feel when Ririe was without an ESL para?

(*pointing to the cake on the table*) Please help yourselves.

Linda (*laughing*) Frustrated, sometimes, just without having the resources that we needed. When we didn't have anybody to help them, I would be so, almost in tears with him, you know, because I felt so bad for him.

Jessica I miss Daniela. I turned to her for everything until she left. And then, I didn't feel like I was, (*loud sigh*) she was so smart, I know she doesn't have as many kids over at the high school, but I didn't feel like it was my place to go over and ask her for help.

Stephanie I miss Daniela too. Even though she wasn't a certified educator, she has strong ties to the immigrant families of Ririe. At one point in her life, she had been a migrant student. (*thinking out loud*) I wonder if she would consider coming out to visit us? I will see if I can make arrangements.

Jessica. (*to LINDA*) We need a full-time ESL teacher.

Stephanie Yes. That seems to be the main concern of everyone I spoke with. There just aren't enough resources to support immigrant students and teachers. The fact that the school corporation doesn't have an ESL program is concerning. Well, when Verónica is here tomorrow, let's discuss the idea of humans as resources.

Linda Sounds good. (*standing up*) Is there anything you'd like me to bring tomorrow?

Stephanie (*shaking her head*) Nah. Tomorrow, we'll have scones with our coffee. (*smiles*)

Jessica Cool. Thanks for having us. See you girls, tomorrow. (*stands up and exits, stage right*)

Linda Bye. Thanks. (*waves and exits, stage right*)

Stephanie (*walks to the center of the stage, picks up CHARLIE, and looks out the window*)

(*to CHARLIE*) I wonder what tomorrow will bring.

The curtain draws to a close.

ACT I

SCENE II

Time: *Sunday afternoon, the next day.*

At rise: As the curtain rises, the audience finds four women sitting around the kitchen table. Sounds of laughter fill the room. On the stove, water is boiling for tea. The smell of hazelnut coffee fills the air. Stephanie appears nervous. Yesterday was a cordial chat between Linda, Jessica, and Stephanie, but today, Verónica has joined the conversation. It will be the first time all four women have sat down together to discuss the immigrant children of Ririe. In fact, at Ririe, the paraprofessionals and teachers are quite removed from each other.

Stephanie Well, I know these scones are homemade, but I hope you all like them.

Verónica They're good. (*She takes another bite*).

Linda Yes. I mean, I loved the Bundt cake, but these are delicious. (*to STEPHANIE*) Made with butter?

Stephanie Yes, ma'am. (*smiling*) I learned that from 10 years of 4-H baking—butter makes everything taste incredible.

Jessica (*placing her cup on the table*) I'm so glad you made the hazelnut coffee today.

Stephanie (*raising her eyebrows*) I have a ton, so just let me know what you want for next time. (*turning to VERÓNICA*) I'm so glad you were able to join us today.

Verónica Me too. (*smiling*) What'd I miss?

Linda (*pausing*) We talked about testing. And how in my class, I had the girls look after Hector.

Verónica (*Slightly tilting her head back, she laughs*). With Hector, honestly, I think he actually appreciated the fact that they were helping him. But I think it got to the point where the girls had taken the title of like, I'm going to tell you what to do. I think he didn't like that. I think it just got to the point where they thought they could control him. (*looks concerned*)

Linda I do have to (*pausing*) kind of fend some of them off. I try to kind of rotate, depending on what it is I need them to explain, some of the girls kind of struggle. Elena can explain to some extent, but she kind of struggles explaining some things.

Stephanie (*to LINDA*) Do you think that puts your bilingual students in an unfair position because they are responsible, sort of, like being placed in a teaching position?

Linda I hadn't thought of it like that.

Jessica We don't have the strong influences. When Elena was in second grade, I mean, she was good, but her Spanish wasn't that great, and neither was her English. Like, she can speak it just fine but her reading skills and understanding skills were not very good. So, she wouldn't be a good person to translate.

Linda (*quietly*) I think we try.

Stephanie (*to JESSICA*) When I was in your classroom, who did you rely on to translate for you?

Jessica I was relying on Donan to translate a lot, or one of the boys to translate, and even then, sometimes the boys weren't even understanding fully. Like Sal, Donan can speak fluent Spanish, but he didn't understand the concepts.

Stephanie (*turning to LINDA*) I remember you had a student that translated for her mother at parent-teacher conferences. How does it feel when you aren't able to communicate with the parents in their heritage language?

Linda (*confused*) Heritage language?

Stephanie Their home language.

Linda I think sometimes there's misunderstandings, you know, because not everything makes it home or they don't understand something that came home. So, you know, I'm always asking the kids, do your parents know about this? Or do they understand about the family night or whatever?

Jessica (*slightly irritated*) There's no ESL program here and I think people are frustrated. We have, like, the parents, like Angel's parents, they say, they saw all of this stuff, oh, that's why he acts the way he does. And then, won't do anything about it. Or won't support us, because like, hey, we're the bad guys.

Stephanie What did communication with parents look like before the pandemic?

Jessica I tried using you (*glancing at VERÓNICA*), remember?

Verónica (*nods her head in agreement*)

Jessica You were able to communicate some (*annoyed*), but then some parents won't even answer their phones.

Stephanie What about during the pandemic? Were you all in contact with your immigrant students and families?

Verónica Honestly (*sighs*), I didn't know what was going on. I had no idea what was going on with the kids. (*appears frustrated*)

Linda (*to STEPHANIE*) I have worried about them, especially my ESL kids. Because they weren't hearing any English. They're gonna be even further behind. My hope was that some of them that are bilingual, filled in for the rest of the folks. It worried me a lot, my little Hector. He was just kind of crawling, but now, I don't know.

Jessica At the start of the pandemic, I didn't have time to make a Spanish packet. It was all in English. But (*turning to Verónica*) they wouldn't have done it anyhow. I mean, and honestly (*appearing taller in the chair*), any of the work I sent home, was never done, even the math problems, that were just adding, subtracting, and had instructions on it, were never done.

Verónica (*appears visibly upset, her cheeks are flush, but won't look up from the table*)

Stephanie Why do you think that was the case? What were your expectations for your immigrant students? (*grabs a scone from the tray*)

Jessica My goal was to get them to at least start trying to put a stake in class. So that hopefully, next year, they could learn a lot. So, I was trying to teach them the basics of stuff. (*pausing*) Um, math. I would prefer for it to come in done, but it never did. I had multiple talks about it. It didn't sink in at all.

Stephanie I'm concerned with placing blame on students when work isn't completed.

Verónica (*turning to LINDA*) You know, Hector was successful in math.

Stephanie He was. (*smiling*) I remember him being super energetic during math time.

Verónica At first, he wasn't doing it. (*looking intently at LINDA*) Remember, Linda? And I suggested to you that I could show him some tricks and now he does it. (*turning slowly to look at JESSICA*) If you let me help them, they'll learn and when you do it again, you don't have to exclude them. They can be included in the homework.

(*awkward silence*)

Stephanie (*to VERÓNICA*) I remember you struggling to meet with all of the students daily. In a K–6 building, with 40% of the population identifying as Hispanic, there are only so many hours in a day to work with students.

Verónica Yeah. (*long pause*) Like my second grade, as the year went on, I didn't see half of them, and they were always asking me, "When can I go with you?" Because they told me, I don't understand this. I felt bad because I wish I could be like, "you guys are coming with me," but you know, if I brought them out, they'd lose the

lecture. So, I felt like that was hurting them, as well. With me, they were learning something, but then they were missing out on another lecture.

Linda If they were able to function, and get what they needed out of the class, I would rather them be in class with me.

Stephanie (*squirming in her chair*) During classroom observations, I noticed that often, the emerging ELL students weren't engaged in class. When I think of Esteban, Liliana, Inès, and Marcos, I often remember them with their heads down on their desks.

Jessica Honestly, it was the lack of motivation. Like, they didn't care. This past year was the first time that I'd really had that, but that was also the first year that I'd had this many.

Stephanie You mean undocumented students?

Jessica Yeah. (*dryly*)

Stephanie But, is it a question of them not caring?

Verónica You know (*pausing*) it was easier for me, as a kid, because I got to learn both languages at the same time. And if I needed help, you know, there was somebody there, you know? I guess, as a kid, I was very lucky.

Linda I mean we've had them actually for so long, the number is growing, but um, I'm just amazed, sometimes, at how quickly they assimilate. When they come in and they're new, they don't know much English, or no English, how quickly—(*pausing*) now Hector didn't do that and I worry about him.

Stephanie (*visibly frustrated*) So, are we placing more value on students who assimilate quickly?

Linda Two years ago, I had a little girl come in and she didn't know English. Very bright and I mean, she worked and worked and worked. And this was in a few weeks, she was able to ask, and get questions. Can I go to the restroom? Can I get a drink? And you know, understand basic directions. She was another one.

Stephanie Undocumented?

Linda Yeah. She cried when they moved because she liked it. Bless her heart.

As the women stare at each other, the curtain draws to a close.

ACT II

SCENE I

Time: *Saturday afternoon, a week later.*

At rise: Stephanie is hugging Daniela and her sister Emilia as they enter the breezeway. Daniela and Emilia, two former ESL paraprofessionals at Ririe Elementary, have agreed to join their former colleagues for conversation and coffee. Around the kitchen table, Jessica, Linda, and Verónica are quietly chatting. Charlie is running in between the kitchen chairs.

Jessica (*standing up*) Oh, I've missed you. (*hugs DANIELA*)

Daniela (*awkward smile)* It's nice to see you, Jessica.

Stephanie Please have a seat. (*pointing to the empty seats*) What can I get you ladies to drink?

Emilia Do you happen to have any orange juice? (*shyly*)

Stephanie Of course. (*rummaging through the refrigerator*) It's pulp-free. Is that OK? (*her head still buried in the refrigerator*)

Emilia (*laughing*) Oh, yes.

Stephanie (*Reaching for a glass from the cabinet, she then pours the orange juice and hands it to EMILIA*) I think you'll love the dessert for today. It's a Joanna Gaines's cinnamon coffee cake.

Linda I just love her.

Stephanie (*to DANIELA*) What can I get you to drink? Coffee? Tea?

Daniela That Moroccan mint tea would be nice. (*pointing to counter*)

Stephanie (*She hands Daniela the tea bag and places the cake on the table. She begins to slice pieces and place them on everyone's plates.*) I'm so happy that you both were able to join us. It's been too long since we've seen each other.

Daniela (*smiles and nods her head*)

Stephanie I'm hoping that today we can chat about the community (*pausing*) and talk about your work with the immigrant students of Ririe. (*smiling*)

Emilia I know I can relate to a lot of them because we were there when we were young. We had to come to school. When my parents would stay for the summer, the farm work was over, but Dad would sometimes get a job at the seed company, where they gave him a few more months to work. There was one year that we stayed until December, so we were young. We had to be in school and I remember how it feels. (*quietly*) You're afraid, you're shy. (*sits taller in her chair*) So, that has helped me because I know what they've been through.

Daniela *(to STEPHANIE)* We were born and raised in Texas. Well, I was born in Michigan and Emilia was born in Texas, but we were raised in Texas. We migrated. Our dad would always bring us here, to the north, to do field work. We were in and out of school.

Stephanie Last week when the four of us met (*gesturing to LINDA, JESSICA, and VERÓNICA*), we briefly talked about how the community has changed over time. I know that Ririe used to have many migrant families, but the dairies and pig farms have shifted all of that.

Daniela (*nodding her head in agreement*) We started as migrants. The reason I ended up being born in Michigan was because my parents were migrant farm workers. Raised in Texas. My husband and I met and that year, we migrated to the state of Washington. His family was there. We worked in the fields during the day and went to school at night so that we could get our credits to graduate. But we moved back here. I've been working here, at least 10 years.

Emilia My three kids went to Ririe. They are bilingual. (*proudly*) They learned their Spanish at home and their English in school.

Stephanie Do you mind if we talk about that? From what I understand, bilingual education is flourishing in Texas, well (*shrugging her shoulders*), at least compared to the Midwest. I don't want to speak for you (*turning to VERÓNICA*), but you had a similar experience in California and Illinois schools, right?

Verónica (*with enthusiasm*) I did. I grew up in, when I was in Chicago, I actually had, I don't know, my first, Kinder, all the way to second grade, bilingual. And when I went to California, my third and fourth, yeah, they were bilingual. And then when I came (*hesitating*) HERE, it was worse, it was way different. When I came here, it was like, straight English. No Spanish, whatsoever, so I thought that was really like, you're done, Spanish is gone. (*sadness fills her voice*) Like, Spanish, you would only speak it at home. English, you would speak it in school.

Daniela I know the way we learned English, because at least in Texas, we were raised in South Texas, so mostly the population is Spanish speaking. When we first came here and had to come to school, I don't know what it is, maybe because when we were in Texas, we were still able to speak Spanish to communicate because everybody understood it. (*glancing at VERÓNICA*)

(*to STEPHANIE*) You know, in the classroom, you're being taught English but when you're doing your conversational, outside playing at the playground with your friends, it's back to Spanish. I learned more of my English until I started coming to school here. And back then it was rare to see a lot of Hispanics (*pausing*), I think it was just us and another family.

Emilia (*nodding her head in agreement*) Most of the migrants would go back to Texas because that's where most of them came from. They would do the field work; it was over and they'd leave. Just a few would stay, like us. (*turning to look at DANIELA)* So, you had to come to school.

Daniela (*clutching her cup of tea*) And back then, there was nobody to help us, so good thing we knew a little bit of English.

Stephanie (*to DANIELA and EMILIA*) I think I shared this. I grew up in a house where multiple languages were spoken, but as I got closer to going to school, my dad, wanting his kids to (*making air quotes with her fingers*) 'fit in,' said, They have to speak English." Did either of you experience that?

Emilia I did (*nodding her head*) because my daughter said the kids used to laugh at her or make fun of her accent. So, back then, she had a teacher she would go to get help with her English. Like the kids now, the Spanish speakers. So now that she's an adult, she tells me that she wishes she hadn't taken that to heart because she would be more fluent in Spanish. Though, the workplace has helped my kids. (*proudly*) Now that there are a lot more Spanish-speaking people here. All three of my kids, they have to communicate with Spanish speakers. So, that has helped them a lot. They have an accent, but they do understand it and speak it because of all the people who are here that are Hispanic.

Daniela If I knew then (*laughing*), like they say, if I knew then what I know now, I would never have allowed my kids to forget their Spanish. (*sighing*) But I just, I guess I didn't know they'd forget it. When my two oldest started coming to school at Ririe when they would get home, they'd just speak English to their younger brothers. (*looking at EMILIA*) But if I'd have known they would have forgotten the language, I would have had them practice Spanish at home and English in school.

Verónica (*To Stephanie*) When I was in fourth grade being bilingual, you know, and me speaking both languages, I thought that that was a big thing. That was important for me. Even though I knew English, I think it was really good to be able to communicate with my teacher in my first language.

Jessica (*to LINDA*) When I think about Lucía, she didn't speak any [English] when she came in, but she learned it very quickly. But she also had a parent at home that could speak English. But he was working with her on speaking English. (*unembellished*) Um, you can tell which parents care and which ones didn't care,

and which ones made up excuses. Esteban's dad made up excuses left and right. And well (*mimicking tone*), he saw this, he saw me almost murdered, so this is why he acts this way. And I'm like, (*flatly*) uh, he's been here over a year, 2 years, almost. This isn't gonna fly. And he was trying to make up excuses for him.

Stephanie (*to JESSICA*) Do you think it was that he was making up excuses or that he and his son were dealing with trauma? (*awkward silence fills the room*)

Daniela In this community, most of the kids that can still speak Spanish, it's because they have parents that don't speak English so, they're left with no choice. They have to learn the language to communicate with their parents.

Verónica My mom, she is (*brushes her hair from her face*) just Spanish. She won't do English. Like she understands but she just won't. And my dad, he's both languages. So, my dad grew up with English. So, he, you know, I guess you could say I grew up with Spanish but I had him, who still talked to me in English. So, I didn't, it wasn't a struggle for me. Yeah, because I grew up with it and you know, it was his help and my bilingual teachers.

Jessica I'm in favor of them learning both languages (*hesitating*) but, I have to push English on them because I can't, (*pausing*) I don't want to say [you get] old, but your brain stops growing. I mean, they're going to pick up English as a second language so much faster than me learning Spanish. And so, I feel bad because I can't, like I had to tell them repeatedly, you have to speak in English. They have to learn it because they're not speaking it at home.

Stephanie So, what is the responsibility of teachers? (*flustered*) How do we support emerging ELL students?

Jessica (*to DANIELA*) When you were at Ririe, you got my books, you worked on materials, you printed out packets. You did all the same things we did, just at a different level.

Daniela Yes. (*a long pause and then glances at EMILIA*) I was doing a certified teacher job.

Stephanie From what I remember (*turning to DANIELA and EMILIA*) you worked with all of the ELL students, but also translated newsletters and helped with testing. Am I remembering that right?

Daniela (*leaning back in her chair*) Any little notes that need to go home. (*hint of sarcasm*) If they remembered, they'd have me translate. Oh, we're going on a field trip, can you translate this? Oh, we're having this tonight, can you translate this for me? (*stands up to stretch her legs*)

Emilia (*In a sympathetic tone, she turns toward her sister.*) Or how much they owed for lunch.

Verónica Honestly, before my interview, they said, like an aide. Help. To me, like, oh aide, helper. And I thought I was coming to help somebody at Ririe that was going to stay here. (*annoyed*) But when I came, at the interview, that's the day that they told me, like, oh no, you're gonna be the one that takes her place (*looking at Daniela*). And that's when I got like, oh, I thought I was gonna be the helper. (*a concerned look is visible on her face*) But no, that's when they like told me, no you're the person that's gonna take over and all that. (*stares at her plate*) I didn't mind it, because obviously, I took the job, you know, but (*long pause*) I, I mean, I loved the job, don't get me wrong.

Daniela (*To LINDA and JESSICA*) Our hands were tied because we're not certified teachers. I'm not a certified teacher. (*passionately*) You might think I'm an expert because we know the language but if we could just get a little help from teachers, with helping with planning. Just tell me what to teach and I'll do it. (*to STEPHANIE*) You know what I mean, but they leave it up to me. (*throws her hands up and walks toward the kitchen window*)

Stephanie (*a long pause*) I wonder if teachers see all of you (*looking at DANIELA, EMILIA, and VERÓNICA*) as experts because you speak Spanish.

Daniela (*slowly walking back to the kitchen table*) Then along came these Spanish speaking ones, no English, from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Puerto Rico. What I did, I just tried to go with basics, like picture cards.

Linda When you guys left (*looking at DANIELA and EMILIA*), the kids, they were kind of adrift. They kind of felt abandoned, you know.

(*to Stephanie*) At first, they thought Daniela was just over at the high school for a while, because she'd go for conferences and things, and then I said, "No, boys and girls. She's not coming back, and they said (*her voice getting louder*), 'WHAT?! SHE'S NOT COMING BACK?'" I mean, they were really upset and I said, "Well, they need her there and they're going to hire somebody else as soon as they can." (*sighing*) So, they were kind of worried and it was hard for them.

(*to VERÓNICA*) Once they met you, I mean, they loved you, the girls especially. They wanted to be with you all of the time. So, they were OK then, once they realized that there was going to be somebody there for them.

Verónica At first, it was really hard because honestly, I think, I just got thrown in there. The kids, I loved the kids and like, I didn't mind helping them, you know, because I'm trying to help my son. (*bravely*) I can do it, but it was gonna take time and I hated (*shaking her head*), I disliked the fact that I was not gonna be there all the time, you know, like I was there, temporary.

Stephanie I find it strange. (*standing up to pour herself a cup of coffee*) Even though 40% of Ririe students are Hispanic, none of you had a full-time para position, right?

Daniela (*to Stephanie*) Before I left, they were fighting to give me more hours, to give me a full-time position, and they got me all, you know, my hopes high, and then the principal ended up telling me, "Well, we couldn't find enough, we couldn't list enough things, you know," to justify giving me 8 hours a day, rather than 6. (*sighing*) And I was kind of offended by that because I do a lot. Now that I'm older, I see, maybe, that I'm not appreciated. You know, with some teachers, a thank-you would take them a long way.

Emilia And you've always worked with ESL students. The other ESL students, they knew English a little bit, so it wasn't so hard for the teachers. But the Hondurans, and kids from other places (*pausing*), they don't know English.

Daniela (*annoyed*) I think it boils down to the teacher having a bad attitude because these kids are taking a spelling test and I remember my three little ones were just sitting there bored out of their minds or they'd be in trouble because they were talking.

Stephanie You are referring to the undocumented students, Liliana, Inès, and Marcos, the ones I met as second-graders, right?

Daniela Yes. (*throwing her hands up in the air*) Teachers didn't want to deal with them. There were times when they didn't want to go to school. Before they learned the routine, and how things worked, they didn't want to leave our room.

Stephanie And I think it's important to say that you left Ririe to go to the high school because they offered you a full-time position with insurance.

Daniela (*nods her head*) I was doing a certified teacher job. They don't pay me enough, so maybe you can say my attitude is maybe not (*pausing*), but when it comes to my kids, I end up giving in because I care.

Verónica (*to STEPHANIE*) It broke my heart because like I'm just, they got used to, like Daniela, they were so used to Daniela, and they loved that she was there. Ten years, so it like broke my heart that, you know, she left, and then they were stuck with ME and you know, they were gonna be with me, but then was gonna leave.

Daniela You know what I'd like to see? (*energetic tone*) For every teacher that has a couple of those students, it would help if they had a Spanish-speaking adult in there but I think in our case there isn't enough money to hire one [aide] for each. It used to be that we would work with the bilingual ones, the ones that are born here, but their parents are first generation, so they need extra help with some of the vocabulary and comprehension, things like that. But, here, lately, we're having to try and teach those that don't speak any English so, we have the

completely non-English and the bilingual ones. Then some are at a higher level than others.

Verónica I think it would be nice to have both languages because a lot of teachers suffer because they don't know Spanish and they don't give it a try. (*turning to Stephanie*) I think I have a lot of patience with kids. And I think they see it. And when I don't, I think they can pull it out and say, "Oh she's getting frustrated, you know." I think I don't get frustrated when they don't know stuff. I don't get frustrated, in that case, because it happens. They're growing up, they're learning. I get frustrated when I have kids that don't care to learn. Like the ones that are trying to distract my other kids. That's when it bothers me. That's when I get frustrated and that's when they see it.

Daniela And because here recently, the kids from Honduras, their situation is a little bit different. Still, they're children, you have to have some, you know, you have to have some empathy.

Emilia (*in a reflective tone*) It makes me feel more compassionate because I remember the feeling, also.

Stephanie (*to EMILIA, smiling*) That's why I think care is so foundational to teaching. As teachers, how often do we foster caring relationships with our students?

Daniela When we were kids, I think we were blessed to have teachers. I remember the ones in Michigan, they were compassionate, I mean, they were white teachers, that just happened to be caring, good teachers. In some way, I always felt included.

Emilia (*passionately*) I think about my daughter. Now that she's older, she remembers. She said that she felt like, um, that something was maybe wrong with her and I tell her now, you just needed that extra help. It didn't mean that you were, you know, it just meant that you needed that extra help—to encourage her English or to get more fluent in English. But she says she remembers feeling a bit, I can't even find the word that she used.

Stephanie (*hesitating*) Valued?

Emilia (*a long pause*) And it doesn't mean that they're less than.

Daniela I was gonna say, the teachers that I had, that I remember before, they even thought of giving me help or putting me in a learning center. I felt like they gave me an opportunity to see how well I got along in the classroom. Maybe if I wouldn't have been able to learn or learn the language, you know, be able to participate, there's a word but I can't find it.

Emilia Included. (*sharing a reassuring look with her sister*)

Daniela Yeah. I appreciate that they gave me the opportunity because when you're young, you can pick up a lot. They will learn. The teachers just need to give them the opportunity. Because for some of the undocumented students now, that wasn't the case.

Stephanie (*to DANIELA*) So, you're talking about some of the students at Ririe?

Daniela One student comes to my mind. Pedro. He was apparently seen out and about and wasn't in school. The janitor, who is Hispanic, saw him and called the principal and Child Protective Services and they went and took him, and the poor child was scared to death. So, they held him up and the next thing we know, he's in school. At that time, we were starting up literacy groups. But they weren't including him in the literacy groups. The para told the teacher that he was misbehaving, and she wasn't going to deal with him anymore. So, the teacher said, OK, he's not going to be in literacy groups and they had me pull him out and work with him. And I didn't like that. They didn't want to deal with him and what upset me even more was that she's Hispanic. You, more than anyone, can communicate with him. He's new in the school, he's new in this place or country. How 'bout you try and teach him some of the rules? No, you can't be shouting out. Your feet have to be on the floor. Sit properly. Pay attention, don't interrupt. Those are basic things you could communicate. But they just didn't want to deal with them. Come January, when they told me they weren't going to include him in literacy groups, I went to the principal. I went and talked to the teacher, and I reminded her. She was like, Ok, OK, we'll include him.

Stephanie I wonder how that incident was viewed within the community. I mean, I wonder what the families thought.

Emilia (*quietly*) They have our phone number.

Stephanie Wait! (*slightly shocked*) The families contact you before they call the school?

Daniela (*Irritated*) I don't feel community, maybe within them, but I don't feel it. They stopped dealing with the school, the secretary, because they don't like her. They think she's mean, she's rude. (*pausing*) I'm sorry. I'm just telling you what they say.

(*LINDA and JESSICA exchange glances*)

Stephanie That makes me sad because the secretary is usually the first contact families have with the school. (*to DANIELA*) I know you were close with Pedro, so I wonder if you ever thought of yourself as an advocate for him.

Daniela You know, some teachers totally ignore them. Especially, with these new ones, non-English-speaking. By law, they can't be with me because I'm not a certified teacher, they can't spend all day with me, so I'm only allowed to pull them out for 30 minutes at a time, 20 minutes at a time, things like that. But then I have to

make out a schedule because teachers will complain, you're not pulling out so and so. My student needs help and you're not pulling him out.

Verónica (*nodding her head in agreement*) I mean, honestly, I think that, as learners, they try really hard. Like they, they don't give up, even though English is very hard for them. They push themselves; you know, they really do push themselves. (*a long pause*) Um, they break down. You know, I think of Hector.

(*to LINDA*) You know, he wanted to learn but it was so frustrating for him. Like it was so frustrating for him because he didn't understand, you know, he knew exactly what to do and he just, like the language barrier, it was very hard for him. Like, I just feel as learners, they're great, they're amazing.

Emilia It brought me joy. (*smiling*) The kindergarteners, the Hondurans, when they came, it made me so happy because when I would bring them for math, they were learning, and it brought me a lot of joy.

Daniela (*to EMILIA*) I remember when they had tested them and I don't know what it was, they tested them, and they said that all of our kids had passed. That they had gotten a 100%, which felt good because sometimes I felt like, we weren't doing enough when they struggled. When they did well, it made us feel like we were doing something right.

Stephanie (*picks CHARLIE up and sets him in her lap*) When I think about my time at Ririe, I was there for about a year, and I met several undocumented students. My good friend, Hermila, has agreed to share some of her experiences as a former undocumented student with us when she comes tomorrow.

Daniela (*speaking to STEPHANIE*) You remember Alaia, don't you?

Stephanie Yes.

Daniela That young lady came in from Honduras, just like all of the others, speaking no English. She was raised by her grandma. Not only did she go to school, but at home, she was taught to do dishes, to clean. The girl can cook and take care of little kids, her little brothers and sisters. But when she first came here, she just started in first grade, and we were almost done for the year.

Stephanie I talked with her. She was a ferocious reader in Spanish and English. (*laughing*)

Daniela Yeah. I think that's what helped her a lot; learn the language and pick it up. She caught up to some of our newer Honduras kids. And is doing better than some of our older ones because she loves to read. She's a good example of, and if you get the right teacher or gives you the chance to learn, yeah, they can learn.

Emilia (*to STEPHANIE*) Melina is another case. She came in kindergarten. Coming to the United States, the way they got here, her and her mom went through a lot. All kinds of trauma, very traumatizing. (*thinking)* And Niko. Some things would spark his mind. I remember after school, they would be eating those cheese crackers, the fish and he said, my dad doesn't like those anymore because that's all we ate traveling this way. And he said, "I like it, but Daddy doesn't anymore." (*smiling*) In Spanish, of course.

Stephanie When you think about it (*quietly*) there are no mental health professionals in the schools for them to talk to.

Daniela They love to tell us their stories, except sometimes we were so limited in time. I would tell them, let's get back to learning, and you can tell me about your story, you know, I'll give you time to tell your story because I do want to hear your story or catch me outside at recess and please finish telling me your story. Anyways, with Niko, it was little things that triggered his memory, but they use terms, you know, that they only use in Honduras. The majority of the time we could understand them, but there were words that we learned that meant something different in Honduras. And I would ask them, how do you say this in Honduras? The words that I did catch were cartel, when they were held up, he said he didn't like the cartel, but he mentioned, and Emilia and I were trying to figure out what he was saying, he was either talking about the Marines or the Coast Guard or maybe the Border Patrol. But he said, them I like. They were nice. But he said the cartel people were mean. He lost his dad and he missed his mom terribly. But they're afraid to bring a lot of the women because they're afraid of what they'll go through. If I would start asking, he wouldn't, but every once in awhile, something would trigger and he would mention things. He said he went 3 days without eating on his way to the United States. They've been through a lot.

As the women look on, Daniela stares at her coffee. The silence speaks volumes.

The curtain fades.

ACT II

SCENE II

Time: *Sunday afternoon, the next day.*

At rise: Five women, Stephanie, Linda, Jessica, Verónica and Hermila, are sitting around a kitchen table drinking unsweet tea. The sun shines through the kitchen window, as the women discuss the area's local ice cream shops.

Stephanie (*smiling at Hermila*) So, have you decided which place you'll stop at on the way home?

Hermila I love strawberries, but that strawberry cheesecake shake sounds amazing.

Linda You can't go wrong at Roxie's. It's so good and cheap.

Hermila Thank you for the recommendation. I love ice cream. We have a diner in downtown Haleyville that serves donuts with their ice cream.

Stephanie Oh wow. (*laughing*)

Linda We are lucky to have amazing dairy products, thanks to the local farms.

Hermila In the town of Haleyville, there's a nice sort of balance of both agriculture and manufacturing. When my dad was (*thinking*), since the age of 16, he started emigrating to the United States to work in the farms in the southern part of the country, and then slowly but surely with time, a group of friends invited him to the northern states and at some point, he reached Indiana. And then he and his brother decided to get out of the farming, you know, the migrant workers, sort of program, and come into a company that's called Bert Farms, which is taking care of animals and sort of a more industry-based job. And so, he and they both found a stable job and that's when my parents decided that they wanted to emigrate to the United States as a family.

Stephanie That's one of the reasons why I asked Hermila to join us today. Not only did she emigrate to the United States with her family from Mexico at a young age, but now she works with immigrant students and families.

Verónica (*interjecting*) I was born in Mexico. I was born there and came here when I was little. My parents brought me out here, so, I was raised here. (*waving her hands*) I've never, if you ask me about Mexico, no. I don't know anything over there. I would be lost. So, I was raised here and [have] been here my whole life.

Hermila (*smiling*) I have two brothers, so there were three of us and then my mom and dad. All of us emigrating at the same time, which we were very fortunate. A lot of

families, you know, with time as I was getting a job and getting older, realized knowing more about how immigration works, learning that a lot of families, unfortunately, have to emigrate either parents first or their kids first, depending on how many there are. So, for us, we were very fortunate that we could come together and (*nervous laugh*) struggle at the same time but together.

Stephanie When you say struggle, that makes me think about… (*pausing to look at HERMILA*)

Linda (*quietly*) Hector. In the beginning of the year, because we didn't have any ESL aides, he struggled immensely. He was away from home, from what I understand. It's just he and dad here. Everything new. Didn't speak the language. Nobody really to help him, so the girls, bless their hearts, stepped in and did as much as they could. But he's much better now that we have Verónica to help him out because he feels like he's got that safety net.

Verónica I feel bad for the kids, because, I think, it impacts them, and then that's where they want to give up. Before I came here (*glancing at LINDA*), I believe Hector would just cry and just give up, you know. I feel bad for the kid. I was happy when he came to me and was like, I need help. Like, can you come and help me. I feel like if I wasn't there, he would be struggling, you know, and he's a smart kid. Like, he is smart.

Hermila Coming to the United States, even though I was technically in second grade in Mexico when we arrived, they went ahead and placed me in first based on the fact that I couldn't speak English. (*takes a sip of tea*)

Stephanie (*to HERMILA*) Do you remember what it felt like to be a newcomer in a U.S. school?

Hermila One of the things that I remember from starting school was just the sheer size of the building. I think one of the things that was hardest for me personally, coming in, myself at the age of 7 and my brother who was 5, you know, and starting kindergarten and first grade, once we got off the bus they would, they would put girls and boys in separate lines. My brother would start crying and he didn't know anybody, so he, we were very new to this country, and he was younger than I was, and I remember trying to walk over to soothe him and they wouldn't let me. (*her face becomes flushed*) And just saying, go back, saying that's your line.

Stephanie Did your school have an ESL program?

Hermila So back then, in first grade, there was only one other child who was Spanish speaking, and his name was Carlos. There was no ELL program. There weren't the numbers, the thinking ahead or planning, so to learn English you had to go the room with children who had learning disabilities. I was there part of the day and part of the day with my first-grade teacher Miss Lauren, that was my first-grade

teacher. But there wasn't much of an option. Part of it was if you wanted to communicate with anybody, you had to learn English. Back then I recall having one bilingual, sort of teacher aide, she wasn't a teacher, and then I had this other (*pausing*) Carrie, she was almost like a teacher's aide, she wasn't necessarily in the classroom, she didn't speak Spanish, but she was just so sympathetic, so I remember both of them and Miss Lauren. So I remember when I went into the classroom. Even though Carlos was a Spanish-speaking student, he had learned English in his home. When he came into Miss Lauren's he could communicate enough. I was her first student of no English at all. So, we were both kind of (*hesitating*), struggling and finding our way to communicate but she was very patient. And that's one of the things, you know, Miss Lauren, I remember there came a point where she sat me next to Carlos. We had these little table cohorts and she said, 'Anything that Carlos does, just do.' So, I just knew I had to kind of do what Carlos was doing. And I remember it came time for our first bathroom break (*laughing*) and so there were boys' bathrooms and girls' bathrooms but I went in where Carlos went and I remember the boys were like (*covers her face with her hands*), "Oh my God what is she doing in here?!" and they were yelling and the teacher rushed right in and she said (*waving her hands)* "Oh, no, no, no" in the boy's restroom. But she was so patient. (*smiling*) I, you know, I was very fortunate to have her as my first-grade teacher. She said, now that I see her as an adult, she always says, "You know, gosh, first grade I couldn't get a word out of you, and second, you were talking my ear off." You know, because she moved up, so I was with her for 2 years, which was really nice.

Jessica (*to HERMILA*) That's how I've been taught. Push English because they have to know how to speak it.

Stephanie I don't think that is exactly what Hermila is getting at. Or am I wrong?

Hermila We had a decent number of just great staff, though many of them had never experienced cultural diversity. They wanted to help. They wanted to assist.

Verónica I just think, a teacher, to show them that they care, I think they need to give it a try and learn their language. (*turning to LINDA and JESSICA*) I feel bad for you because maybe you do want to try. I feel like as we get older, it's harder to learn a new language. I think, you have a busy life and to sit down and… (*pausing*) but you can pick up some stuff. And I've noticed, teachers do pick it up, they just don't use it, a lot.

Jessica (*to STEPHANIE*) When I was in elementary school, they did try to teach us some Spanish. And then if you had an LD (*pausing*), Learning Disability, like I did, they yanked you out during that time. So, I only knew some colors and some numbers via that experience. And it pretty much taught me that foreign language had no value. And so, it took me awhile to realize, yes, it does have value and now I'm trying to learn Spanish and it's trying to overcome those things. But…

Linda But like with Hector, he wasn't getting much out of what I was saying, so he spent more time over there in Para(dise) with her, (*looking at VERÓNICA*) working on basic English.

Verónica (*looking at LINDA*) Linda, she keeps me busy. (*smiling*) She always has them doing something. And it's always like, a certain homework. You have to do this; you have to get this done. (*glancing down at her tea*) But other teachers, they're usually like, here, take them, which is horrible because I feel like I should help them on what they're doing in class, just so they know what's going on.

Stephanie (*to HERMILA*) I know we never talked about your experiences through a lens of care, specifically, but how did your white, monolingual teachers support you?

Hermila I remember in second grade, toward the end, Mrs. Gates said you know I want you to be in (*thinking*) they called it STRETCH back then for gifted students. The teacher that we had, he was Mr. Green. And she approached Mr. Green about getting me involved in STRETCH once I started third grade. He didn't want me to be in STRETCH because he didn't feel that I was fluent enough. He was afraid, I think. Also, how he is kind of going to handle [me] and so Mrs. Gates did not give up. She advocated, she said, 'You know, we cannot prevent her from taking part in something when she has a right to just because she doesn't speak English.' So, in third grade, I started STRETCH and I remained in STRETCH from third to sixth grade. (*smiling*)

Stephanie So, what was it about your teachers that stuck with you?

Hermila Part of it, Miss Lauren was just someone I appreciated having as my first-grade teacher, advocating for me. And Mrs. Gates was a strong female. I saw her as just somebody who was decisive and determined. Elementary, I think slowly you know, we had a good number of teachers that were very empathetic and good teachers and then slowly more ELL students started coming in. Then, once I got into middle school (*sullen tone*) things changed.

Stephanie (*a long pause*) Do you feel comfortable sharing your experiences with us?

Hermila Of course. I remember being in school and teachers not allowing us to speak Spanish, even in public spaces within the school. I remember being at the middle school and my family and I would typically go to Mexico for the holidays, and we would typically be gone for 2 weeks, and I remember this teacher who was making it so difficult for me to be able to leave. Like he would basically threaten me and say, 'If you leave, I'm not going to give you work to make up, so you'll just fail my class.' And back then, there was this other teacher Miss Thorn. She was, they called her the Queen Bee, and she was so self-confident and determined. I saw that strong female and she was the one who went and advocated for me with the principal and said, 'You know, one of our teachers is not, you know, this young lady she does well in most of her classes (*laughing*)

and so why is she not being allowed to go?' And so, I remember, with the community, sometimes going into spaces, whenever I would be interpreting for my parents, just getting these glares and (*pausing*) and the places, I still don't set foot into are specifically diners or that sort of thing.

Stephanie (*with immense passion*) Honestly, I don't think we pay enough attention to students' emotional well-being. I think it's so important that we remember that kids don't leave their feelings and experiences at the door. (*looking at LINDA*) I know as an adult, that's hard to do. I know we want our students to learn and that we have standards to meet, but caring for students' emotional well-being, in my opinion, is just as important as supporting their academic and physical needs. Our students go through a lot, and I worry when there is little to no trust between teachers and families. How does that impact students? I worry about the assumptions we make about students….

Hermila So, some undocumented families are more, (*pausing*) they are very afraid of who might know their legal status and tell this openly too. I had a mom who was here, and she works under a different name. So, who can you disclose that to and know that you're not going to be reported? I grew up and I've been translating and interpreting since the age of 9 and I've been exposed to a lot of different families and I feel like I've been able to earn people's trust by making sure that whatever they tell me is in confidence and that whatever I tell them, I'll be very open if I'm not 100% sure of an answer and I will be honest, and I will try to connect them with the people that can be a better assistance, that can guide them [through] whatever they're going through.

Jessica (*defensive tone*) I try to be open-minded on that sort of thing. But Inès and Liliana both played the devil's card a lot. So, for awhile, I thought Liliana understood a lot but there could be a learning disability there. I mean, for how much she fought me on it. She looked like a 4-year-old. I wondered if her papers are correct. But of course, she also missed a lot of school, so did Inès. Inès has had DCS [Department of Child Services] called after them. The same thing with Marcos. For Marcos, it was the fact that he was bouncing between homes. He was bouncing, but Inès, she missed enough school, that we could report it.

Hermila (*looking directly at JESSICA, her eyes softening*) When I was young, when I was little (*smiling*), sometimes I think I became aware of, even within my own family dynamics, I became aware of things that would be considered adult problems. Typically, things that kids are not aware of. I remember because from an early age interpreting for banks and I knew my parents' financials and I remember sometimes going to bed sometimes and just praying, God please help my parents be able to afford, whether it was rent or a house payment, these things that typically a young child would not worry about. Praying to God about, (*pausing*) it was (*pausing again, hesitation in her voice*) stressful but I enjoyed it, for the most part. You know when I started interpreting, especially in clinics, hospitals, I remember my mom would come home and say so and so is going to pick you up

> at this time and they need help at the clinic or hospital or whatever. There's this one time my dad broke his, we were in Indianapolis and my dad played on a baseball team and my dad broke his collarbone, so we had to go down to Methodist and I don't remember, I think I was around 16 or 17 and I remember that there were no interpreters in the hospital, so I was interpreting for my dad and he went to surgery and then my mom and I stayed behind in the waiting room and when I remember there was a nurse, or I remember what she was basically asking if there was anyone who is comfortable with English and Spanish, you know we need interpreters and my mom looked at me and so. (*pausing to brush the hair from her face*) And I interpreted for multiple families that day and then there came this thing of would you like to work here, would you like to be an interpreter and I was like well I don't drive, and I don't have transportation and they would actually come and pick me up at a gasoline station on the interstate. My dad would go, and I did that for, not too long, just a few months, I don't remember how many months, but I do remember there were a couple of times when they would take me directly from the hospital and I would go directly to school. And that was (*a flustered expression appears on her face*), that was a unique experience. Now that wouldn't happen because of the whole liability and all that sort of thing. But for me it was eye-opening. So, I think from a very young age I understood the importance. So even though it was stressful, sometimes it felt a little overwhelming, and all those feelings. I still got to see how firsthand, how much it meant, and how much it would help me in the future too. Some of the students today, don't see it because they have older siblings who were able to translate, or maybe parents [who] are bilingual, or you know, or they're just not connected.

As her brown eyes turn glassy from the emerging tears, the curtain fades.

ACT II

SCENE III

Time: *Saturday afternoon, a few weeks later.*

At rise: Linda, Jessica, and Verónica have returned to Stephanie's house for one last gathering. An assortment of tea sandwiches are delicately placed on the table. Two extra guests have joined the women on a beautiful, sunny June afternoon. Stephanie has just finished introducing everyone to Dr. Nel Noddings and Dr. Geneva Gay, two experts in the field of teaching and care ethics. While the house still feels warm and inviting, the atmosphere is more formal.

Stephanie I appreciate you both traveling such a long way to be with us today.

Nel Noddings Thank you for having me.

Geneva Gay Yes, thank you. I enjoy these intimate conversations. Normally, they take place at AERA [American Educational Research Association] during the fireside chats.

Stephanie Yes. I haven't been able to see you speak at AERA yet. (*smiling*) The reason that I've asked you both to be with us today is that we hoped you both could discuss your thoughts on care.

Nel Noddings As you may know, in 1984 I published *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics & Moral Education.* (*sighing*) But my critics questioned my use of the word feminism.

Stephanie I appreciate you mentioning this. I know that you've updated the book a few times. Is it OK if we refer to the 2013 edition of *Caring*?

Nel Noddings Yes, of course. Instead of using the word "feminine" (*pausing*), "relational" is more appropriate. We, humans, all want to be cared for, and ethical caring is the state of being *in relation*.

Stephanie Dr. Noddings, could you explain what you mean by ethical care? Or maybe give us a definition? (*grinning*)

Verónica Oh yes, please. Like, when I think of care, I think like, I don't know. (*laughing*)

Stephanie (*laughing*) For almost 2 years I've been asking people their thoughts on care and no two reactions are the same.

Geneva Gay	(*to VERÓNICA*) That's OK. You know, it's challenging to move care beyond feelings and emotions. Most educators agree that care is vital to their relationships with students but can't seem to put a practical (*lifting her hands, she makes air quotes*) 'face' to it.
Nel Noddings	Yes. That's why it's important to start the conversation by making a distinction between caring-*for* and caring-*about*. Caring-*for* requires a caring relation. I can care-*about* or express concern for another person, but that doesn't mean that they will necessarily respond.
Geneva Gay	I agree. When I began thinking about care and marginalized students of color, it was clear that caring-*for* is active. When a teacher demonstrates a cared-for approach, emotionality is coupled with purposeful action.
Jessica	(*interjecting*) For me, care is love. It doesn't matter what you say or do. I mean it does, but it doesn't. It's one of those weird words. Care is something that you do to make somebody's life a bit better. I mean, it's love. What would you do? You love, you care for them. You make sure that their life is a little bit better.
Stephanie	(*pausing*) So, what does that look like in the classroom?
Verónica	I mean (*hesitating*), I've seen caring classrooms. When it's caring, the teachers are more interactive with the kids, helping them, you know, not giving up on them. They just don't like, OK, whatever. And I think they just sit, and they help them. Teach them, you know. They're there for them. They care for them, as well. I think it's mainly that.
Geneva Gay	(*turning to VERÓNICA*) Caring is active. For teachers to genuinely and effectively care for minoritized students of color, they must see, respect, and assist them in growing academically, culturally, and emotionally. This is how we come to *know* our students.
Nel Noddings	Knowing requires a commitment to act and the requirement of what I call engrossment, or caring mental attitude. Because caring is reactive and responsive, the one cared-for is present in acts of caring. (*places a salmon-cucumber sandwich on her plate*)
Stephanie	Dr. Noddings. In terms of education, can you talk about unequal caring relations? The student-teacher relation?
Nel Noddings	Yes. To avoid confusion, I'll refer to the teacher as the *carer* and the student as the *cared-for*. For a caring relation to occur, the teacher must be attentive. To be receptive requires the teacher to listen to identify what the expressed needs of the student are. It's important not to assume what the student needs, but rather, be receptive to the student's experiences.

Stephanie	(*nodding her head in agreement*) That makes sense. Often, I think we, teachers, or even the schools, think we know what students need in terms of curriculum, behavioral plans, etc. But how often do we listen to our students? (*pondering*)
Linda	(*places her cup on the table*) I think about Hector's needs. (*pauses*) Actually, the person that I've found that has the most luck is Lucía and her family is from Puerto Rico. The other girls, [were from] Honduras and Guatemala, and Mexico, so they're from all different places and so I think their Spanish varies. I know our kids that come from, like Mexico into Texas, their Spanish is a little different. They have kind of that Tex-Mex, but Lucía seems to have the most success, sometimes, explaining things to him.
Stephanie	(*looking at LINDA*) Honestly, I'm so happy that Hector has classmates who can help him, but (*slightly frustrated*) aren't we concerned with the relationship that we, teachers, have with our students?
Geneva Gay	Stephanie if I may jump in. (*STEPHANIE nods her head.*) Linda, when I think about teaching, I see it as a holistic enterprise. When we focus on the relationships between students and teachers, I think of authentic care as being grounded in trust and respect. It's a reciprocal relationship that is maintained through student learning.
Nel Noddings	And coming back to Stephanie's earlier question because the relationship is not equal, both the teacher and the student must contribute to the establishment and preservation of caring.
Stephanie	Dr. Gay, if I recall correctly, don't you say that care is attending to the person and performance? (*Hearing the whistle of the kettle, she walks to the stove.*)
Geneva Gay	Yes. Think of the analogy of home. Culturally responsive caring teachers consistently create a climate of care that moves beyond teaching subject matter. (*As STEPHANIE pours the hot water into her cup, she reaches for the Lemon Ginger tea bag.*)
Linda	(*to DR. GAY*) So many people bring up the fact that Ririe is like a family. And the kids kind of treat each other as brothers and sisters. I do think that the older kids feel responsible for the younger kids. (*flatly*) But there are some that will say, this isn't my home. But I think, for the most part, a lot of them do have that family feeling. And they miss it, like on vacations, they miss seeing their friends.

Stephanie	(*to LINDA*) I wonder if the immigrant students of Ririe feel at home since that's the school motto.
Jessica	(*to STEPHANIE*) Ok, I'm going to do a reverse question for you. How is their home life? So, if they are supposed to feel at home, and their home life is hell, do they really want to be coming back to school? It would be better to say when you're here, you're safe. So, that's kind of where, I don't know their home life. I don't know what they expect or yet, do they understand that phrase? I know they see the motto, in Spanish, and I've seen it in Spanish, but can they read it to understand that same message?
Geneva Gay	I like to say that counts (*pausing*)—culture influences how we think, communicate, behave, and for teachers, how we teach and learn. And when we adopt a culturally neutral perspective, we are essentially ensnared in a deficit orientation.
Stephanie	Dr. Gay, could you please elaborate?
Geneva Gay	I'm sure you're all familiar with the term "at-risk." Deficit thinking concentrates on what students of color don't have or can't do.
Stephanie	Basically, it devalues the differences of ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse students, right?
Geneva Gay	(*nods her head in agreement*) Cultural diversity is a strength.
Stephanie	And as Daniela and Hermila both reminded us (*a long pause*), the kids have been through a lot. And when they come to school, they're trying to make sense of their new environment.
Linda	I worry extra about them. Um, like, when I'm planning lessons or how is this going to work [with] my Spanish-speaking students or is there something in this that they won't understand. Or are there words here that I'm going to need to explain, that I wouldn't explain to my other kids. Or, you know, I just do a lot of extra thinking about them when I'm doing planning or coming up with lessons or ideas. Like I said, now, I worry a little bit more [about them] than I do the rest, so, it's a lot of extra thinking about those kids. And how you're going to approach the lessons and everything.
Jessica	(*frustrated*) But, the language barrier. If it wasn't for the language barrier, I probably would have gotten to know them more. Because their behaviors were, I think a lot of it, due to the fact that I didn't know how to (*pausing*)—like, I knew they had to get frustrated with the fact that I had them on the computers to do stuff, but that was the only thing at their level, considering that I didn't know enough Spanish to teach them. And at

	that point, I kind of wished we had, I don't want to say segregate[d] them, but if they don't know enough English, then they almost need to be in their own thing until they can speak, at least a little bit more. (*shrugging her shoulders*) Because like Liliana, I still have no clue on how much English she actually understands.
Geneva Gay	Unfortunately, non-Native English speakers are subjected to the assumption that they possess low intellectual abilities due to their (*making air quotes with her fingers*) 'limited' English skills.
Jessica	As learners, they made some progress, but I mean, Marcos, I saw a lot of progress. But he wanted to learn. The other three that I had, didn't want to learn. So, that was the big issue. They just wanted to stay in their Spanish-speaking world and not venture out.
Geneva Gay	Because immigrant students and families have geographical, cultural, and psychoemotional uprootedness, school achievement is impacted.
Stephanie	(*rolling her eyes*) And then I feel like we, teachers, place the blame on students for not being 'engaged' in class when in reality the issues are complex.
Geneva Gay	Students of color, including immigrant students, are subjected to stereotypes, racism, and do experience prejudice. All of this has a lasting impact on students' academic achievement, as well as their socio-emotional well-being.
Jessica	I know the ESLs sometimes feel excluded. And I know we're not to do segregation but some of those kids who are coming in for the first time, into a school, really should be segregating 'til they have a Kindergarten-level speaking. (*To Stephanie*) I hate doing that, but I don't know enough Spanish nor does half the population of the schools. I know numbers in Spanish. I can count pretty high and if someone starts counting with me, I can count higher. The math, they could stay in there for, but the reading, until they understand, they're just sitting. There's no point. They'd be better off in a secluded [classroom]. Teach them how to read in Spanish. Teach them how to read in English. Once they have the Spanish foundation in reading, then they can get the English. They don't have that. And then you're expecting them to learn to read in English. They need time to learn their own language.
Verónica	I think we, teachers (*hesitating*), need to give it a try. If you want students to give it a try, you know, speak both languages, right? (*pausing*) They want them to learn English, I think, in our situation too, if we didn't know English, we should give it a try and try to understand them. You know, how they say, we get mad if they pronounce our name wrong. Right?

(*turning to look at LINDA and JESSICA*) If they say your name wrong, you want them to pronounce it right. So, that same way too, I think we should try and speak a little bit of their language, try and speak their language if teachers want students to know ours. Because I just feel like, we should be able to talk, or you know, understand them the way we want them to understand us. You know, be bilingual.

Nel Noddings — As a way of being-in-the-world, we can't reduce caring to empathy; caring requires thinking. And yes, dialogue is foundational to the student-teacher relation. It's a way of building trust.

Geneva Gay — Teachers who plead ignorance miss opportunities to know their culturally diverse students. Our expectations of who our students are ethnically, culturally, and linguistically are interconnected with care.

Verónica — You know, when we read books, and they ask me, I think I've got to the point where I showed them, it's OK to ask me in Spanish. Or it's OK for you to tell me, what does this mean? Because I've read books that are in English and then I'll tell them, OK, I'm going to read it in English but then I'll tell you what it means in Spanish. And now, when I read in English, they'll tell me, can you tell me it in Spanish? (*proudly*) And sometimes they're like, can we read in Spanish? You know, but I think, personally, I think that if, if I teach them both languages, like tell them this is a bike, but in Spanish it's *bicicleta*, I feel like they have that image, when they're trying to say it, like, oh, she said this in Spanish. It's this. I think it's good for them to learn both languages because they do grow up saying, I did learn English, but now I've forgot Spanish. You know, which is horrible.

Nel Noddings — A caring climate is *underneath* everything we do as teachers. Going back to Geneva's point about "can-do" and "can't-do," teachers adopt a "can-do" mindset when a caring climate is established and maintained.

Verónica — That makes sense. (*nodding her head*) They know that I'm here to teach them, to help them, like I care about their education. You know, because I feel like if you have a big classroom, you can't really show them that because you're teaching a whole bunch of kids. So, they have to get with it, or, you know…. And I think that happens to everybody when you're in school. You're with it. And you know, some kids are embarrassed to ask, and I feel like when we're in small groups, they know, oh she cares. She's going to help me if I do understand or I don't understand. (*pausing*) So, I think, being in a group just shows them that you're there for them. Like, you're going to help them.

Geneva Gay — Yes. That caring climate includes concern for students' emotional and physical well-being. But teachers also focus on the economic and

	interpersonal conditions as a way of cultivating efficacy and agency for marginalized students of color.
Linda	(*perplexed*) Efficacy and agency?
Geneva Gay	Helping students develop their interests and aspirations for the future. Building their self-confidence and leadership skills.
Nel Noddings	This requires motive energy or what I call motivational displacement.
Geneva Gay	Caring is active. Our caring attitudes must be grounded in actions.
Nel Noddings	Yes. As the teacher listens to and reflects on the student's needs, there must be a response from the student for a caring relationship to exist.
Jessica	But (*sighing*), there's such a language barrier. When I think of Esteban, he would pretend he didn't know English, he would pretend he didn't know Spanish, at times. So, there's no, I couldn't figure out how to get over that barrier.
Nel Noddings	(*to JESSICA*) Sometimes conflict arises. Sometimes teachers lack the resources, but to maintain caring relations, the teacher is tasked with keeping communication going.
Jessica	Most of them, I'll give them a hug. (*energetically*) Most, "Oh, you look pretty today," if I don't know how to say "pretty" in Spanish I'll go up to so and so, you know, one of the girls, "Hey, how do you say this in Spanish?" And then I'll go up and tell that to Liliana. And then you see her light up.
Geneva Gay	When teachers care for ethnically diverse students and, mind you, you don't have to be of the same ethnic group as your students for this to work (*pausing*)… for our students to be successful, we hold students to high-quality standards—academically and socially, as well as personal performance.
Nel Noddings	And remember that the student's role in this is simple, in the form of a response. Somehow, they will show that care has been received.
Stephanie	Dr. Noddings, what might this (*makes air quotes with fingers*) "look like"?
Nel Noddings	It could be a smile or nod of the head. Maybe asking questions or expressing energy, but it doesn't necessarily take the form of expressed gratitude.

Geneva Gay	Yes. This reciprocal achievement promotes positive interpersonal relationships between students and teachers. And because caring is multidimensional, teachers who come to respect the humanity of their ethnically diverse students enter into partnership with their students.
Verónica	If you care for them, honestly, they will respect you. If you respect them and treat them the same, we're the same, just because I'm the teacher doesn't mean that I'm better than you, bigger than you, or I have more authority, I guess, they'll respect you. I don't know. I've always told them, you respect me, I'll respect you, it's just how it works. You know, be honest with them.
Geneva Gay	For culturally responsive teachers, respect for students' cultural backgrounds and ethnic identities demonstrates a commitment to caring. Our attitudes and expectations are interconnected with care.
Stephanie	Thank you, Dr. Gay. So, with our remaining time, what advice do you both have for Linda, Jessica, and Verónica?
Nel Noddings	Geneva and I both touched on the importance of creating a caring climate. To demonstrate an ethic of care, we need to model, be active. To be *in relation* with our students, dialogue is essential. As I mentioned earlier, teachers need to listen to their students and reflect on their attitudes and practices.
Geneva Gay	I wholeheartedly agree with Nel. Dialoguing about cultural diversity begins with personal self-awareness. As teachers, acquiring a knowledge base about cultural and ethnic diversity helps us to grow professionally. As I tell my students, caring is learned and requires practice.
Stephanie	(*to DR. GAY*) Because your work specifically focuses on ethnically, racially, socially diverse students, what practical advice might you have for teachers?
Geneva Gay	As Nel said, be mindful of your attitudes, beliefs, and expectations. Develop and maintain reciprocal relationships. To *see* your ethnically and racially diverse students requires active and engaging learning. To *hear* your students doesn't always require words. Nel reminds us of students' expressed needs; be present, pay attention. To *listen* to your students begins in the classroom but moves into the community. Become a broker of culture, behavior, and knowledge.
Stephanie	(*proudly*) Becoming an advocate.
Geneva Gay	An advocate and ally. (*smiling*)

The curtain draws to a close.

ACT III

Time: *Evening, the same day.*

At rise: It's evening on the farm. All of the guests have left. The house is quiet except for the sound of running water in the kitchen sink. As the hot water mixes with the dish soap, a mountain of suds emerges like an iceberg. On the kitchen table are empty coffee mugs and plates. Stephanie stacks the cups, one on top of the other, and sets them in the soapy water to soak. Most of the food has been eaten, except for a few crumbs of coffee cake that have dried. Scraping the plates off into a large green plastic bowl, Stephanie makes her way to the back door. The coyotes will love this dessert, she says aloud. Smiling, she opens the door, and Charlie, who has been snoozing on top of the back of the couch, darts for the door. "Come on, Charlie!" she says to the Yorkie. As she makes her way across the yard, toward the bean field, Stephanie's bare feet make compressions in the warm grass. Chucking the coffee cake in the field, she turns to watch the sun. Blazing pinks and oranges consume the evening sky. The air feels hot and humid, and the light breeze is welcomed. Charlie runs to the back door and sits, a sign that it is time to go inside, but smiling, Stephanie shakes her head. "No, Bud. We have another visitor coming." As she makes her way to the wooden deck attached to the house, she melts into the oversized swivel chair and waits. Charlie leaps into her lap as the faint sound of a car approaches from down the road. Watching the car drive up the gravel lane, Stephanie holds Charlie close to her chest. "Shush. Stop barking. It's OK!" As Hermila makes her way to the deck, Stephanie smiles.

Stephanie Hello, my friend. Thank you for coming back. (*grinning*)

Hermila Of course. It's too nice of an evening to sit inside. (*sits down*)

Stephanie You know, I do my best thinking outside. Maybe it's something about the fresh air. (*pausing*) I appreciate you sharing your experiences with everyone. I'm hoping it opened people's eyes, and maybe their hearts. Overall, how do you think it went?

Hermila (*A long pause*) These are conversations without easy answers, which can make it more difficult to discuss. However, I think that if we are intentional about thinking about these things and creating a space to engage in which we feel safe talking, exploring, discussing, sharing, etc., it will lead to awareness, ideas, and, hopefully, empowerment, ownership of our responsibility, and encouragement. Change can be difficult, even when needed, and sometimes we hope for a simple way of overcoming big obstacles or problems, and this is often not the case. It can feel daunting, overwhelming, and lonely.

Stephanie That's why I invited everyone here, around the kitchen table. After my observations ended, it just seemed (*pausing*), I don't know (*shaking her head*), wrong for the conversations to end.

(*CHARLIE jumps down onto the deck.*)

I mean, I live here. Honestly, I didn't know this would happen, but I feel invested in what happens to these children, teachers, and families. (*sighing*) All of these feelings, emotions. (*laughing*) Lots of good intentions….

Hermila I don't recall if I shared this with you, but during my first 5 years as an educator, I didn't want to draw any attention to the work that I was doing. I was afraid of being told "No," being questioned, and being accused. With time, I realized that even though the work we were doing wasn't perfect because we are always trying to improve, it was having a positive impact on the people we were serving. My fear of losing my job became secondary to the work we were doing. Something shifted inside me that gave me more room to breathe and I would dare to say (*pausing*)—freedom.

Stephanie I've come to be quite fond of this community. It has its issues (*pausing*), I guess every community does, but I have hope. I want to work toward real change, whatever (*making air quotes with her fingers*) "real" means. I guess above all else, I want to be active. I know I'm an outsider, I always will be, but maybe an outside perspective could be helpful.

(the *sound of wings fluttering overhead startles CHARLIE, as a group of robins zips by in formation across the evening sky*)

When I think about immigrants, I first think of my own family. But then, I think about the students I've taught. Not too long ago, I had a student come to visit me in my office. He wants to be a teacher. I thought he wanted to discuss his future, but he had more imminent concerns. He is undocumented and wanted to talk about immigration. I didn't know what to do. At first, I approached our conversation in an academic tone, citing journal articles. (*laughing*) Doesn't that sound bananas? (*rolling her eyes*) But then (*pausing*), I thought about my dad, my family, and shared whatever I could.

Hermila You know, I've studied immigration for a while and even having the opportunity to work with students and having the learning experiences that I've had, I still feel like an intruder sometimes. And so, working with DACA [Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals] students, for example, we have this student who, oh my gosh, he's such a wonderful student. He struggled. He was such a gifted and talented speaker. One time, we invited him to our annual dinner, and he gave one of the speeches and he received a standing ovation. He was such a gifted speaker and there came a point when he realized he was undocumented, and everything shifted. And especially when the nasty things started coming out because you don't have the Social Security number, you shouldn't be here. You know that sort of thing. So, he started believing that. And I find myself still feeling like, OK, so I've come into this community, and it was not a welcoming community, you know. Here, there were times when people, Latino adults, you know, we're

wanting to have something. For example, Hispanic Heritage Month. They wanted to have some sort of celebration in the downtown or in the park, and I remember people just saying, “Well, why don’t we have an Italian [Heritage Month] or what about the Italians.” And just that sort of (*pausing*) mindset, the English only.

Stephanie (*nodding her head in agreement*) I find that so frustrating. Why don’t they hurry up and learn to speak English? Or why don’t they become citizens the “legal” way? Sometimes I find it challenging to think about a hopeful future when the current narrative is consumed by deficit thinking.

Hermila Having lived in Haleyville for 24 years, there are still places in the community that I don’t step foot into. I make a conscious decision not to and it’s not like I fear for my life, but sometimes I have this feeling of being an intruder.

Stephanie Intruder? (*looking perplexed*) What do you mean?

Hermila There is still room for improvement when we look at the structure of our community, you know, one of the biggest things [is] that it’s not reflective of our demographics, our leadership, but I think that the leadership that we have now, even though they are primarily white, and we still have a good mix that are primarily male, you do see them trying to reach out to the minority groups. That's, that's been something good to see. (*thinking*) Now with regards [to], for example, a diner in the downtown, I've been wanting to go to this diner for many, many years now. My brother finally went, I think it was in 2018 or 2017 but he works for the city, so his boss took him in, to the diner, and [they were] there sitting and eating and they were approached by another male, and he looks at [my brother’s] boss and says, “What is he doing here?” pointing to my brother and saying why did you even bring him in. And when [my brother] told me that, it reassured me, don’t go in there, you don’t need to put yourself through that, you know. But, you know, finally, crazy, I went there for my birthday, August 2nd, 2018. I decided I wanted to go there for my birthday. And I asked my brother if he would be willing to go with us. He kept returning with his boss, I mean his boss loved that place. And so, it was my brother, my husband, and I that went in. And you know, you actually could kind of tell, that people were like “What are you doing here?” but the one female who did approach us was with a positive comment. And her thing was, I like the shirt you're wearing. (*laughing*) She was an older lady, white hair and that was wonderful. She smiled so nobody else said anything nasty and they may have felt a little weird and uncomfortable but nobody else approached us. And we sat down in one of the corners because it was my first time so yeah, and there are still places. There's this one diner, that my husband and I have been wanting to go into, but with the colleagues that he works with, basically, they told him, they don't recommend you go in there if you don't want to be approached by someone in a negative way. So.

Stephanie (*expression of shock*) What about the schools? Is the local school district supportive of diverse populations?

Hermila It is, but it needs more resources on how to do it, like when you talk to the leadership. I've attended administrative meetings and had the opportunity to talk with them. They have people with the right intentions but maybe not necessarily with the right tools. Not too long ago, I went to a 3-day training. I just went the year before COVID, so part of what they talked about are the stages of cultural competency. And the one in the middle is the minimalist. Which basically says we treat all of our students the same. (*laughing*) Right?

Stephanie Color blindness?

Hermila Yeah. And so, it comes from a good place, but it doesn't come out with good results. I think that's where several of our teachers and our leadership are at. [They're that] minimalist. They don't see it as wrong and it's hard to explain why.

Stephanie So what do we do? How do we get people to (*making air quotes with her fingers*) "see" (*pausing*) [how] to take steps toward trying to become culturally aware and hopefully competent?

Hermila If you're not in there with the right mindset and you really want to learn and look at yourself, you could get out of it and say that was a waste of time. So, you have to be ready to self-analyze and think and reflect and be like OK, be honest with myself, where am I at, where do I want to be, and what do I need to do.

Stephanie That's true. (*smiling*) I find your role within the community to be fascinating. You're like a liaison between the families and the schools. I see you as an activist.

Hermila I have a very strong relationship.

Stephanie With the schools?

Hermila Yeah. I do and I think part of what helped was when I started as the director of the afterschool program. I was also a school employee, so, I had access to things that people normally don't have access to, like student databases and everybody's email. I think that has been a huge help. I think again the leadership, again they don't, I feel like they don't have the tools to really be fully supportive.

Stephanie There are not enough resources in Shelton County but I also think people need tools. Right now, there are no adult education classes, no after-school programs to support diverse students. No professional development for teachers on how to work with diverse populations. (*frustrated*) I mean, there's no ELL program. The Title 1 person who works with emerging ELL students is white and monolingual. (*rolling her eyes*) Jessica was right, the push is English.

(*turning to HERMILA*) Sorry. Would you like something to drink?

Hermila Whatever you've got will be fine. (*smiling*)

(*As STEPHANIE makes her way to the back door, CHARLIE follows. After a few minutes, STEPHANIE returns with a pitcher of lemonade and two glasses. After pouring Hermila a glass, she sits down.*)

Stephanie Let me know if you get hungry. (*grinning*)

Hermila While you were gone, I was thinking about the Haleyville schools. For example, the FAFSA [Free Application for Federal Student Aid] night, they'll promote it in their schools, with the afterschool biliteracy program for kids, we have a bus that brings the kids from school to our building. When we have information on 21st Century Scholars. The counselors will say, 'If you need help, let us know and we'll go over.' When we started a Latino parent advisory board, you know, they had staff in the evening, talking to our parents about what they did, the way they did it, and that sort of thing.

Stephanie I was so impressed by all of the programs that your community offers. When I observed FAFSA night, I noticed you were speaking Spanish to both the students and the families. But a few times, I noticed the students responding in English. I wonder why….

Hermila That's one of the things I've observed, back in 2010 when I started as the director of the after-school enrichment program. Oh my! (*pausing*) That was an eye-opener for me, just realizing how much students, even those whose first language, native language was Spanish, how much now they depended on their English. And for me it's very important to be intentional, trying to approach them in their native language. I want them to see the value that it has to be bilingual and bicultural at the same time, respecting that if they prefer another language they can. Sometimes I do approach a student in Spanish, and I can feel like they're a little bit lost and I will repeat myself in English. Sometimes when I sit down with the parents you know, if I know that the parents are bilingual, [and I ask them,] do you feel comfortable with me speaking Spanish, that they're understanding most if not all of what I'm saying. But it is a common thing to see students who reply in English or tell me that I speak English.

Stephanie I hope that Jessica and Linda now understand how important being bilingual is to not only Daniela, Emilia, and Verónica, but to their students. My mother-in-law Anne, who worked at Ririe as the librarian, told me that the adults would tell the immigrant kids to stop speaking Spanish. (*annoyed*) "Speak English," they would say. (*pausing*) Are you kidding me?

Hermila As an educator, I think one of my wake-up calls, when I started as a director was, the actual tutoring program. I was very naive. We had 250 kids in the actual tutoring program in five different schools and I actually remember thinking, these kids are going to be excited because they're going to see somebody that looks like them and speaks their language and that was not what I found. So, for me, that was a wake-up call as to what was happening in the Latino community. So, when,

I remember the first school I visited was Rabbit Creek Elementary, and I remember trying to approach students and when I thought there was a Spanish-speaking student, I would approach them and say, “Como estas?” the response that I would get from them was not what I was expecting. It was typically one out of three things, they would either answer to me in English, or they would tell me, “I know how to speak English,” or they would ignore my comment in Spanish but then if I would approach them in English, they would talk in English. So, for me, that was (*pausing*) what was going on? And that position also gave me an opportunity to be in touch with parents, and I started hearing their concerns. They would start saying, “I’m having a difficult time. I’m trying to teach my child Spanish and they don’t want to, now that they’ve started school. They won’t eat my food anymore. I don’t know what to do,” or just so many things that were happening and so that’s where some of my programs as a community educator come from.

Stephanie Yeah. When I think about the emerging ELL students (*pausing*), they hear English for a minimum of 8 hours a day. And when they’re chastised for speaking Spanish. (*frustrated*) How can they navigate both worlds?

Hermila Like the biliteracy program. I want them to see the value of bilingualism but at the same time, I wanted them to see where they need to improve. Like one of my students, there were some words where she was getting caught up but because she has that positive attitude toward her bilingualism it will encourage her to improve rather than for some students that aren't necessarily able or [don’t] see the value of it. Another reason why not even to try.

Stephanie (*smiling*) Anytime I feel frustrated, you remind me to be patient and keep moving forward. I admire that (*pausing*), truly.

Hermila I want to be a partner. (*smiling*) There's a lot of populations that we’re unable to reach. You know, as a nonprofit entity in a county that's supposed to serve the whole county but primarily based in Haleyville but trying to let other schools or teachers or other nonprofits to do their best, to offer this population the experiences or programs or services or whatever. Trying to be intentional about partnering and intentional but creating awareness and the students who are of, who come from Hispanic heritage. I tell the kids, I know you want bigger, and I know you want maybe things that are more exciting, but look at the community where you come from and see how much it needs you and see if you have it in your heart to want to give back to it. (*a long pause*) Right?

(*As STEPHANIE and HERMILA pause to enjoy the evening sky, CHARLIE perks his ears toward the sound of mooing cows. Off in the distance, the sun is a perfect circle of bright yellow enclosed by oranges and pinks. To the north, the faint white lights of the dairy are visible.)*

Stephanie I know it's getting late but I keep thinking about the emerging ELL students. Their experiences are different from the other immigrant students. I wish my participants understood that….

Hermila That's one of the reasons why we created the *Investigating Your World* program. That program is for students who have immigrated to the United States within the last couple of years, and one of the three main objectives for that program is empowerment. I want them to see the skill set that they have, regardless of the language that they speak, regardless of the country they come from, whether it is considered a country of poverty when you compare it to the United States. I want them to know that there's (*pausing*)… that they're valuable people, that they have a perspective that needs to be represented and, instead of assimilating, we just need to continue to open doors. (*a long pause*) Sometimes, I have these conversations with my husband, like I wonder am I victimizing myself, am I the problem, like am I the one, you get into that mode, it's what you see is what you hear, you're the problem, it's not us, why are you trying to force us to see these things? I think that's one of the reasons why I attended the national conference, because we are not the problem, that was not the issue, how we feel it's valid, that change needs to happen, yeah, it's not in our heads.

Stephanie (*shocked*) Why would you ever think you're the problem?

Hermila I can see sometimes, as minority groups, we feel like we have to be thankful for what we already have, instead of expecting more. Well, at least we have an ELL program, at least some of the forms are in Spanish now and see that's a mindset to then I find myself, I found myself doing that, well at least we have this, at least we have that (*pausing*)—not that it made it OK, not that it meant that some of the programs weren't needed, but it was trying to make it OK for whatever we didn't have. You understand now? (*laughing*) But (*confidently*), it's not good enough. I think that's another thing with our students, it's that mindset that, well, at least we can all sit where we want. Sort of thing, do you see what I'm saying? (*turning to STEPHANIE*) Even as I was doing my thesis work, for my Master's degree, I remember coming across an article that talked about teachers and egalitarian teachers versus multicultural teachers, that to me was an introduction to, oh my gosh, because egalitarian teachers think it's OK to treat everyone the same as long as I treat everybody the same way. And (*sighing*) is that a favor, no? But that's how we interpret it. As a minority group, sometimes up here (*tapping on her forehead*), that's how we interpret it. It is a favor to us, so thank you for at least treating us the same way or whatever that means.

Stephanie That makes me think of Dr. Noddings work on care. The hope is that teachers think about how their students feel, but not from the teacher's perspective. I went to Catholic schools, and they constantly would say, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," but that's not it—the Golden Rule doesn't apply. (*pausing*) Dr. Noddings stresses that the hope is to understand that the circumstances differ for immigrant students. Or as Dr. Gay would say, value

human worth equally but recognize the differences, be it… socially, culturally, racially, linguistically. Our students are individuals.

Hermila For me, it's trying to make sure that they have space and trying to be the person they feel comfortable approaching. Giving them that sense of empowerment and yes, you do have knowledge and skills to offer for students that are still coming and making sure that they feel that empowerment through real-life implementation of things or programs, or whatever it may be. Also, trying to host things, I think students know when you really care, you know, we have these programs on Saturday mornings because it's the only time they could do it because they're involved in sports or a lot of other things and so we have these programs on Saturday mornings. I guess I want to ensure that things are happening.

Stephanie (*a long pause*) It takes time and commitment. It's a change in attitude and it's coupled with action, but it's not enough to say, "I care,"

Hermila I remember in the beginning, through 2017, probably the first 3 years, having, making this conscious decision to not wanting to draw attention to what I'm doing, even though I'm proud of what I'm doing, and even though I know these are programs that are needed, having people draw conclusions because of the programs, we were promoting through whatever, and I remember consciously, for example, being conscious about not promoting the workshops that I did for *quinceañeras*. (*pausing*) The parenting programs in Spanish. I felt like, I thought I was justified because I didn't want to draw any attention because there's been that reputation for providing services for Latinos and illegal residents. (*long pause*) Because of what that would do, you know? (*looking at STEPHANIE*)

(*Standing up and walking to the ledge of the deck*)

Two years ago, I made this conscious decision to say, you know what, I'm tired of feeling like I have to hide programs, so, I am gonna promote the programs I have and if they don't want me, they will fire me. (*laughing*) But I'm tired of spending energy, mental energy, physical energy, and hiding things, and when I go to other states and other counties these things, they want them, yet the county where I'm at, doesn't (*turning to look at STEPHANIE*), and I don't think it's everybody, that's another thing that I'm kind of going through right now. (*sighing*) It's trying to get a sense. So that has been one of those things I've been trying to get clarity on, to gauge where are we at now, from where we were 5 years ago, 3 years ago, 3 years ago, and to this point.

Stephanie I have always appreciated your honesty and passion. My dissertation research left me so (*pausing*)… frustrated. The most difficult part of researching teachers' experiences with Latinx immigrant students was (*a long pause*) the way they perceived their students, especially the undocumented students (*sighing*)—through a deficit lens. Witnessing the daily microaggressions made me so

incensed. But then, I remembered you and your work. I wish communities would work with one another. Haleyville and Ririe have so much to learn from one another.

Hermila (*smiling*) I admire your tenacity, your conviction, and your perseverance to start and continue with these important conversations. We need more of that, and we need more like you. You are a friend to me, Stephanie, and I hope we continue to work together beyond our time in any particular organization or institution.

Stephanie Thank you. That means so much.

The curtain closes.

CHAPTER SEVEN. IN COMMUNITY

In the previous chapter, every day kitchen-table conversations guided my understanding of how participants engaged in an ethics of care with Latinx immigrant students. Additionally, these imagined conversations provided an organic space for "kitchen table reflexivity, where through informal conversations, researchers critically and reflexively engage with the fluidity of their positionalities throughout the research process" (Kohl & McCutcheon, 2014, p. 748). In this chapter, I continue the conversation-focused style of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013) in the form of *relivings* and *retellings*. However, remaining true to the fluid, three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, this research text is temporal and embodies "what has been, what is now, and what is becoming" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 146). In the following chapter, as a way of looking toward future experiences, I invite you, the reader, to engage with preservice teachers in discourse around culturally responsive teaching practices (Gay, 2018) with Latinx students. The following pilot episode of the podcast *In Community* aims to engage preservice teachers in conversations around their future pedagogical practices grounded in care.

Podcast – *In Community*

Episode One: *In relation—listening, reflecting, responding*

Note to our listeners:

1. A transcript will be provided for each episode, which includes in-text citations and a list of references in APA format. Direct quotes will be identified, within each episode, by noting the author(s) by name and date of publication.
2. Preservice teachers' names are gender neutral to promote inclusivity.
3. Preservice teachers' questions are loosely based on real-life conversations with PSTs.
4. All names referenced in this episode are pseudonyms.

Enter music: Title of music "Inspiration"[17]

Greeting: **(2 minutes)**

Welcome to *In Community*, the podcast that helps preservice teachers think deeply about their future pedagogical practices. My name is Stephanie Oudghiri. I'm a 5th-year doctoral candidate in Curriculum Studies, a teacher educator, emerging qualitative researcher, and a former 6th–12th-grade social studies and language arts teacher. Having lived in both urban and rural communities, I've been fortunate to teach in a wide variety of school settings, including parochial, charter, alternative, and public. Thank you for joining me today.

Reasoning:

My inspiration for *In Community* comes from my work with preservice teachers, or PSTs, over the past 4 years. I love teaching and working with undergraduate students who are exploring the teaching profession. I wanted the first episode of this podcast to focus on answering *your* questions. Today's episode is grounded in how educators, or teachers and paraprofessionals, work *in relation* with diverse student populations. I'm drawing from Nel Noddings, one of the foremost scholars on care ethics. In 2012, Noddings published an article in which she discussed how listening, thinking, and responding were central to caring relations. So, that's how I've structured our conversation for today. Honestly, that's how I think about my relationship with

[17] No copyright. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCht8qITGkBvXKsR1Byln-wA

PSTs—*in relation*. And often these relationships grow through transparent dialogue. To help me answer today's questions, I'm drawing from my personal and professional experiences, current literature in the field, and my research. And while I don't pretend to have all of the answers—in fact, you'll probably be left with more questions than answers—I hope that by sharing insights with you, I can guide you toward resources that will assist in developing future authentic relationships with students, families, and communities. So, once again, thank you for joining me in conversation.

Question One: (12 minutes)

Our first question comes from Bryce. "Dear Stephanie, during my field experience, my mentor teacher mentioned that her first-grade class would be welcoming some new students. She described these students as 'newcomers,' but I later learned that she was referring to undocumented immigrant students. In my future classroom, how will I know if an immigrant student is undocumented and why should it matter? Aren't teachers supposed to treat everyone the same? Also, how can I effectively communicate with immigrant students and their families when I only speak English?"

Bryce, I appreciate your email. Words matter, so I want to thank you for using inclusive language. It's important to recognize that these students are undocumented and not "illegal." Not only is the term "illegal" inaccurate but it is also dehumanizing. In fact, for at least the past 2 decades, within the United States, it has been common to use the term "limited English proficiency" when referring to immigrant students (Martínez, 2018). However, this deficit language is often a way that *we*, educators, normalize *our* monolingualism. Many students come to our classes as multilingual, and yet we fail to recognize their linguistic skills as assets. So, hopefully, throughout your teacher education you will continue to hear and use terms such as

newcomers (Oikonomidoy et al., 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2020), culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students (Allen, 2017), emerging ELLs (Coady et al., 2019), emergent bilinguals (EBs) (Garcia 2009), and Spanish dominant ELLs (Cheung & Slavin, 2012).

Bryce, regarding your first question, "How will I know if a student is undocumented?" The simple answer is that you won't know. As a teacher, the only time I was privy to a student's legal status was if they chose to share that information with me. And as you can imagine, a tremendous amount of mutual trust and respect are needed between the student and teacher in order to have those intimate conversations.

In a review of the literature on the experiences of newcomers from 2000–2017, Oikonomidoy et al. (2019) examined the complexities that undocumented students faced once they entered the United States. They found that newcomers encountered myriad stressors, including negotiating family dynamics, experiences of barriers within their new school environment, and psychological pressures, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Oikonomidoy et al., 2019).

From my research, which focused on how educators worked with and cared for Latinx immigrant students, white, monolingual teachers had limited knowledge of the physical and emotional trauma that many of their undocumented students experienced when traveling from Central America to the U.S. Southern border. Whereas, the paraprofessionals, who shared similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds as their students, were better able to identify and respond to issues related to students' emotional well-being. Therefore, the teachers were quite removed from their undocumented students' experiences and left the social, emotional, and academic care to the paraprofessionals, and, in many instances, to other immigrant students. As teachers, to cultivate authentic relationships with all our students, it's imperative that we focus on active

engagement. And by active engagement, I mean, moving ourselves beyond the four walls of our classroom.

Why should a student's immigration status matter? Well, from my study, I learned that teachers expected students to leave their "baggage" at the door. But for many undocumented students, they had just left behind family members and desperately missed them. And once they arrived in the United States, these undocumented students faced a new set of challenges, including fear of a family member being deported and trying to navigate a new, unfamiliar classroom environment. Their personal experiences impacted every facet of their lives, but the teachers in my study didn't see it that way. They placed blame directly on undocumented students and their families whom they deemed "uncaring."

Additionally, during the Trump administration, undocumented families were confronted with the construction of the southern border wall, travel bans, and the end of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program (Oikonomidoy et al., 2019). However, according to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, as of January 20, 2021, President Biden issued a memorandum to "preserve and fortify DACA." And while we won't unpack the complicated history of DACA in today's episode, I would like to explore the current status of DACA in the post-Trump era for a future episode. As the laws change, teachers need to stay updated on the policies. As educators, we have a responsibility to inform ourselves about the unique set of challenges that our undocumented immigrant students face each day. Education researchers argue that it is crucial for teachers to not only demonstrate empathy by listening to and understanding their students but also increase their sociopolitical awareness of undocumented Latinx students (Rodriquez et al., 2020).

As to your question, Bryce, aren't teachers supposed to treat everyone the same? I highly encourage you to listen to a TedTalk by Mellody Hobson recorded in 2014 titled, "Colorblind or color brave*?"* because it gets to the heart of your question. Colorblindness is defined as "rationalizing racial unfairness in the name of equal opportunity" (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, pg. 31), and it continues to support a "white cultural frame" (Fergus, 2017, p. 32) because, instead of acknowledging and promoting students' cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and racial differences, a colorblind approach further marginalizes students by suppressing their experiences. From my study, white teachers' declaration that they treated all students equally equated to a colorblind approach that suppressed students' right to speak Spanish in the classroom and focused only on the Western European curriculum. Ultimately, the teachers valued immigrant students who were able to quickly assimilate into the dominant classroom culture.

Bryce, for your last question, how can I effectively communicate with immigrant students and their families when I only speak English? During my study, white, monolingual teachers expressed feelings of frustration when working with their immigrant students due to the language barrier. These feelings of inadequacy, lack of resources, and training led to linguistically diverse students being placed on Chromebooks for extended hours of the day or left on their own, often with their heads on their desks. Additionally, teachers relied on multilingual immigrant students to communicate with emerging ELL students. Later in this episode, we will talk about cultural brokers, but for now, language brokering is "the act of interpreting and translating between culturally and linguistically different people and mediating interaction in a variety of situations" (Tse, 1996, p. 226). I observed immigrant students serving as language brokers for family members during back-to-school registration and parent/teacher conferences. Additionally, student language brokers provided interpreting and translation assistance to their teachers on

behalf of their classmates. What surprised me was that while the teachers heavily depended on student language brokers, they also criticized them for failing to communicate important concepts. The teachers noted that while many of the student language brokers were able to translate assignments from Spanish into English, they themselves were academically limited and struggling to develop their own reading comprehension skills.

In a study conducted in the United Kingdom that examined young adult language brokers in schools, the researchers observed that while there was an advantage to children acting as language brokers in the short term, the long-term impact favored adults who could assume the role. The study found that while student language brokers felt valued in their role as interpreter and/or translator, which highlighted their linguistic and communication skills as assets, the students also faced disadvantages, including missing out on classroom instruction and being exploited as an interpreter and/or translator. Additionally, the use of students as language brokers favored English acquisition over the opportunity for them to practice their heritage language (Crafter et al., 2017).

And while I'm not a literacy expert, my study was conducted in an elementary school. As a former sixth-grade teacher, I was curious about resources that I could share with my participants who were PK–6 educators. In 2015, Marianna Souto-Manning and Jessica Martell published a book titled *Reading, Writing, and Talking: Inclusive Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learners, K-2*. This book is grounded in a strength-based perspective that promotes a pedagogical shift for educators to shed deficit language and practices. The authors write, "As educators, it is our responsibility to recognize the potential and brilliance of racially, linguistically, and culturally diverse children and to teach literacy in culturally relevant ways. To do so, we must stop perceiving diverse children as being 'at risk' and embrace their promise,

bringing it to reality in our classrooms. We must make sure that diverse young children experience academic success, grow proud of who they are, develop cultural competence, and question inequities. After all, day in and day out, they are failed by schools and society" (pgs. xiii-xiv). My favorite chapter in the book is Chapter 3, *Building a Learning Community That Honors Diversities*. In it, Souto-Manning and Martell (2015) discuss the importance of loving each child and venturing beyond classroom environments by encouraging home and/or community visits as a way of honoring and valuing diversities.

So, you might be wondering how this all connects to the idea of listening. As Noddings (2012) stated, "A carer is first of all attentive and watches, and listens" (pg. 773). Building a relation of care and trust takes time. Working with students whose backgrounds differ from our own, means raising our consciousness of being *in relation* with them. In one recent study that examined how monolingual teachers engaged with emergent bilingual (EB) students in a high school classroom, the authors found that teachers who saw themselves as co-learners with students recognized and embraced their students' wealth of knowledge. Classroom environments shifted from "traditional" to "translanguaging" practices in which curricular decisions were co-created and negotiated with students (Hanson-Thomas et al., 2020). Essentially, the "traditional" role of a teacher was turned on its head. For me, we (educators) need to be conscious of listening to voices in our classrooms that have been historically marginalized. This means, seeing our students for their uniqueness, and listening and learning with them by identifying and amplifying their assets.

And now a word from our sponsor. Advocating for change, advocating for students. #RedForEd is about educators, parents, and communities uniting for better school funding for our students. Find out more at www. nea.org.

Question Two: (14 minutes)

Welcome back. Our next question comes from Riley. “Dear Stephanie, in my teacher education courses, I often hear the phrase, ‘teachers as learners.’ What does it mean to learn with and from your students?”

Thanks, Riley, for emailing me. I love this question for a few reasons. First, there are multiple ways of approaching or unpacking what it means to be a teacher/learner. Both the question and answer are complex. Now for me, this is exciting because I can draw from years of teaching experiences, theory, and my research, but for PSTs, this concept can be intimidating. You might be thinking, I’m no longer a student. Haven’t I learned everything that I need to know? Or, I’ve always wanted to be a math, or science, or social studies teacher. Am I not the expert in the room? Won’t my students draw their knowledge from me?

The second reason why I appreciate your question is because it’s grounded in identity. When I think about identity, so many questions flood my mind. Who am I as a teacher? How does my personal self influence my professional self? How do I cultivate my identity as a teacher?

I’m happy to hear that you are being exposed to the idea of being a teacher/learner in your teaching education program. Essentially, the idea is that being a teacher is *in relation* to being a learner. As teachers, it’s crucial that we make meaning of both our identities and positionality. And when you think about the multiple facets of identity—race, class, religion, culture, sexual orientation, gender—it might feel overwhelming, but it’s important to recognize that our perspectives and experiences impact not only our teaching, but our relationships with students and families (College of Education, Strand 3).

And as I was reflecting on your question, I was reminded of the book *Teacher Identity Discourses* by Janet Alsup. In it, she states, "identity development is difficult, messy, and complex, and that it must be exactly this way" (Alsup, 2006, p. 5). I find something comforting in that statement, that we should embrace the messiness of developing our teacher identity. She also reminds us that teacher identity is holistic. It's a recognition of the self and awareness of others. It's about the whole person.

So, to help you make meaning of the idea of teacher/learner, I'd first like to share a story from my teaching past. And then, I want to briefly discuss an activity you can adapt to raise your consciousness about various aspects of teaching using reflective practice. And since we are using Noddings (2012) as a guide, she refers to reflective practice as "receptive listening (attention)" (p. 775).

My first teaching job was in a suburban, Catholic school where I taught sixth-grade social studies. When I graduated with my teaching degree, there was no mentoring, no teacher induction programs of support. I was told by both my principal and several colleagues that during the first 3 years, I would feel like I was drowning and that the best way to deal with my chosen profession was to do whatever I could to keep my chin above water. Instead of drawing on theory as a way of informing my practice, I was on my own, winging it and I relied heavily on the ways I had been taught.

Which is completely scary, when you think about it, because I attended Catholic schools from second through twelfth grades. And as you can imagine, in a Catholic school everything begins and ends with discipline. Instead of focusing on a student-centered curriculum, cultivating student-teacher relationships, and building community with families, I took an authoritative approach to teaching. I thought that I needed to be a strict disciplinarian in order to have control

over my students. In my mind, that was the key to everything because that's how I had been taught. And I turned out OK, right?

During my first year, I taught approximately 90 sixth-graders each day. Many of them, I can't recall their faces, but I will never forget a boy named Ricky. I think I labeled Ricky as a troublemaker after week one and he rose to my expectations. He would talk out of turn, make farting noises, and was constantly out of his seat. He drove me crazy.

As a new teacher, I had unrealistic expectations for my students, governed by fear. My students sat in rows that faced forward. They were required to remain at their desks at all times and be quiet. The curriculum came directly from a standardized textbook, and my style of teaching was to lecture from the front of the room.

I cringe when I think about this now. For those of you who are fans of the book, *Matilda*, I compare my attitudes and behavior to this. While I longed to be Miss Honey, I embodied The Trunchbull. And because I didn't know how to teach, I was relying on past teachers who included members of the Catholic clergy and on teacher portrayals in novels (i.e., *Matilda*, *Anne of Avonlea*, *The Freedom Writers Diary*), which was problematic for my students and my growth as a teacher.

Never did it cross my mind that my students were individuals, with their own unique experiences. Not once did I ask my students what they were interested in learning. At the time, all knowledge came from me.

OK, back to Ricky. His attention-seeking behavior was something that I didn't know how to address. Therefore, my source of inspiration came from my former second-grade teacher, Sister Shirley, who used to keep me in from recess to copy passages from the Bible until my

hand curled into a claw. In my mind, if Ricky wanted attention, that's exactly what I was going to give him.

Sometime early in the fall semester, during one of my boring lectures on the Ancient Greeks, Ricky began acting up. Honestly, I don't remember the specific act that sent me over the edge, but I do remember 29 pairs of eyes, like the billboard of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg in *The Great Gatsby*, staring at me, waiting for me to react. I was pissed, and I recall interrupting my lecture to drag Ricky's desk across the room and over next to my desk, isolating him from his classmates. "What!" you might be thinking. "That's bananas! What kind of teacher does that?!"… This girl, and to this day, I'm ashamed of my reaction and subsequent behavior. At the time, the only way I even considered "dealing" with Ricky was by isolating him. Just as Sister Shirley had done to me. And saying that out loud, makes me feel so sad. Isolation.

When I think about Ricky, pre-isolation, I remember that his shoes were always dirty. I was continuously picking up clumps of mud off the tiled floor. The middle of nine children, Ricky had a dad who was an electrician, and his mom was a part-time aide in the Kindergarten classroom. My only interactions with Ricky's family were when I would corner his mother in the cafeteria to discuss her son's mischievous behavior. That poor woman! They lived in the neighborhood that surrounded the school. And in the evenings, when I would walk my golden retriever, I would often see Ricky in the yard with his siblings. And as I walked by, waving hello, I would often find myself making unfair and unkind judgments about Ricky and his family. Why was he always dirty? Why didn't his parents spend more time with him? Clearly, he needed attention, why did they have so many kids? Why, why, why!

Much to my surprise, during Ricky's isolation, his behavior didn't change. For weeks, Ricky's desk was an extension of mine. He seemed to enjoy his new seat and would often ask me about the pictures and trinkets that were scattered throughout my room.

When I wasn't lecturing, I was at my desk, sitting beside Ricky and surprisingly, with each passing day, I learned something new about him. He was a huge Indianapolis Colts fan, and when our school celebrated spirit week, he wore a blue and white Peyton Manning jersey with proudly displayed grass stains on each shoulder. He had a used Honda CRF50F dirt bike that his grandpa had bought him on his 11th birthday, and he was obsessed with it. His favorite dessert was "worms in dirt." He used to tell me that his mom would hide the gummy worms *super deep* in the chocolate, so he *really* had to dig.

As I took time to listen to Ricky and his weekend adventures, I realized that this fun-loving kid was super cool, and my attitudes toward him and beliefs about who he was, including his family, began to shift. The things I thought I knew about Ricky and his family couldn't be further from the truth. His dad was a small business owner and was often away from home because his was a "one-person" operation. Luckily, Ricky's grandparents lived down the road, and Ricky spent a lot of time with his Grandpa Terry tinkering with his dirt bike. Hence, the source of the mud clumps in my room.

When Ricky's mom wasn't able to attend parent/teacher conferences in late September, I blew it off as lack of caring. What I later learned was that Julie was battling breast cancer and served as a part-time aide in the Kindergarten room when she was feeling well enough. She took a job in the school because it allowed her flexibility, but more importantly, she was able to see five of her children throughout the day.

But you might be thinking, Stephanie, there has to be a better way of getting to know one's students as human beings without isolation? And yes, you would be correct. Please don't do what I did. I was lucky that I accidentally stumbled upon an authentic relationship with Ricky, but I wish I had gone about it in an entirely different way. While I don't believe that I permanently harmed him, I made a lot of mistakes.

So, at this point you might be thinking, why should I care about Ricky and what does this story have to do with becoming a teacher/learner? Well, 12 years later, I was reminded of Ricky when I met a student who was physically and socially isolated from his second-grade classmates. The story, *Boy in the Blue Box*, can be found in my most recent publication, *Negotiating tensions: An autoethnographic account of classroom-based research* (Oudghiri, 2021). These narratives are just some examples of racism and biases that currently exist within schools. What I found from my research was that teachers praised immigrant students who assimilated into the dominant classroom culture. For those immigrant students who were undocumented, when confronted with language barriers, the teachers would often physically isolate these students from their peers, thus further marginalizing them. Additionally, when students' backgrounds (i.e., cultural, ethnic, linguistic) differed from their own, the teachers were less likely to cultivate caring relationships with their students. Overall, through a deficit lens, the teachers were quick to draw negative conclusions about who their undocumented students were based on their academic performance and behavior. Even though teachers had limited interactions with undocumented students in the classroom and minimal to no interactions with families outside of the school, they couldn't move past their own biases and stereotypes.

Observing the isolation of Leo, *the Boy in the Blue Box*, for a year brought back memories of not only my shortcomings as a teacher, but also (upon further reflection), my own

past experiences of being physically isolated from my classmates when I was in second grade. In each case, the teachers viewed their students through a deficit lens and made unfair and uninformed judgments about their students (i.e., labeling them as troublemakers, lazy, or uncaring). So, what new knowledge can we glean from this story?

First and foremost, teaching is relational, and building classroom communities grounded in authentic student-teacher relationships is key. But as teachers, we often believe that learning only takes place within our four classroom walls. Learning with and from our students means recognizing and embracing our students' "funds of knowledge." In 1992, Luis Moll, a professor from the University of Arizona, along with teachers, doctoral students, and anthropologists designed a collaborative project that examined classroom and household practices within Mexican communities. They defined funds of knowledge as "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (p. 133). By focusing on the importance of household knowledge, which included "families' work experiences, social practices, and social history," Moll and his team strongly advocated for home visits.

Now, I understand that when you hear "home visit," you might be filled with apprehension. Each semester, when I ask PSTs to describe their greatest concerns about teaching, the majority identify future interactions with families. I've been fortunate to teach in both rural and urban school settings in Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Idaho, where home visits were encouraged. From my experience as a teacher, I was able to develop a more authentic relationship with my students by getting to know them and their families outside of the classroom. Moll et al. (1992) found that teachers whose funds of knowledge were informed from experiences with students' homes, knew the "whole person" and that their knowledge was thick

and multistranded, versus the traditional teacher-student relationship, which, is often thin and single-stranded. The "typical" teacher-student relationship is bound to the classroom and is based on student performance.

Stepping outside of ourselves and our classroom requires a shift in thinking. So, again, you're probably thinking, how do I shift my thinking? How do I learn, or in my case, unlearn, some of the harmful thinking and practices?

When I think about my teaching, I wish I had spent more time reflecting, rather than reacting. The renowned social studies teacher and scholar Merry Merryfield has written extensively on reflection. As a teacher educator, she encouraged her students to improve their pedagogical practices by developing a reflection tool. In 1993, Merryfield published an article in which she debuted the *Tree of Life* activity. According to Merryfield (1993), "when teachers enter a teacher education program they already have a world-view. Reflection can play a role in learning from the values, beliefs, knowledge, and critical experiences that contribute to our perspectives of ourselves, other peoples, and the world" (pg. 27). Merryfield's activity continues to be used by teacher educators to promote global competence and social justice (Schwarzer & Bridglall, 2015). Just as a reminder, this article is cited within the references of this episode's transcript. Additionally, I will provide an example of this activity that I've used in my teaching.

Briefly, the activity asks you to critically reflect on your identities and positionalities, by mapping your experiences using a tree, which is divided into three parts—the roots, the trunk, and the limbs. While Merrifield's focus was on preparing globally-minded educators, the beauty of this activity is that it can be modified to suit your specific needs. I've modified this activity for PSTs who were reflecting on their study-abroad experiences, as well as for in-service teachers who were being introduced to critical approaches to understanding immigration issues (Osei-

Tutu et al, 2021). In both cases, the overall reflexive questions ask you to think deeply about who you are and how your experiences impact your professional growth.

The “roots” of the tree encourage you to examine your family’s history. Think about your history, values, childhood experiences, and cultural heritage. How has your family influenced your understanding of those who were different from you?

The “trunk” represents examples from your PK–12 experiences. For example, significant positive or negative experiences, and curricula that you found meaningful.

Finally, the “limbs” represent your developing knowledge. This could be articles or books that you are reading, professional development, student/families funds of knowledge, and even podcasts. Merryfield (1993) encouraged her students to partake in this activity as a way of understanding, “how our perceptions or perspectives of the world affect our acquisition and processing of new knowledge” (pg. 28).

What I appreciate about this activity is that it evolves as we do. How we perceive others is rooted in our past experiences, and the *Tree of Life* activity helped my students and myself illuminate these understandings by confronting biases and seeing beyond stereotypes. As we reflect, we choose to identify significant moments from our past that help to inform our present behaviors and future beliefs. When we adopt a teacher/learner approach, our philosophy changes as we meet new students and families, and we make meaning of our changing communities.

So, you might be thinking, what happened to Ricky? By October break, Ricky and his desk reunited with the rest of the class. For the remainder of the year, I made sure to check in with each of my students. Ricky was the first and only student that I have ever physically isolated.

And while my pedagogy did not change overnight, as I have shifted from teacher to teacher/learner, I've learned to focus on what was most important to me, cultivating a relationship with my students. This meant examining where my attitudes and biases came from, reflecting on how I came to know my students, and reevaluating my current practices in terms of addressing students' behavior. Over time, I became open to new ideas, such as more physical movement throughout the day. I scraped lectures for activities that were relevant to meeting my students' needs. At the start of year four, I ditched the "traditional" social studies textbook for a curriculum that highlighted local histories. I actively sought out ways to improve my teaching by repositioning myself as a learner. And as I tell my PSTs, I will continue to be a lifelong learner.

And now a word from our sponsor. Welcome to Learning for Justice, (formerly known as Teaching Tolerance!), which provides K–12 educators with free resources to promote identifying and addressing systemic injustice in U.S. schools. Find out more at www.learningforjustice.org.

Question Three: (10 minutes)

Thank you for joining me for our third and final question for today. Drew writes, "Dear Stephanie, in many of my courses, we've discussed how important it is for teachers to embrace the role of advocate. How can I become more knowledgeable about the diverse communities I will be working in?"

Drew, thank you for your email. When I was going through my teacher education program, I wasn't exposed to the idea of "teachers as advocates." Rather, teachers were supposed to embrace a neutral identity in which they focused on their content and classroom management. I appreciate you pausing to reflect on the future communities that you will serve.

Your question speaks to the heart of Nodding's (2012) philosophy of *caring as relation*. She posited that, "after listening and reflecting, the carer must respond" (p. 772). Think of responding as the active component to a relationship that needs to be established and maintained. Keep in mind, without a reciprocal response between the teacher (*carer*) and the student (*cared-for*), a caring relationship cannot exist.

Throughout my career, I've been fortunate to teach in a variety of communities. In 10 years, I taught in three different states and for five different school districts. Each time I moved into a new community I was acutely aware of my "outsider" status. Therefore, I understood that to be *in relation* with my students and their families, I needed to be an active, engaged member of the community.

So, I appreciate your interest. You are already adopting a teacher/learner perspective by asking questions. It's important not to make blanket assumptions about who our students are and the communities that we serve. During my study, teachers described undocumented immigrant students and their families as "illegal," "sneaky," and "untrustworthy." In terms of the overall immigrant population that lived within the community, teachers would often use terms such as "broken homes" and "uncaring" to describe families that, from their perspective, did not take an active role in their children's education. So, if you're thinking about this in terms of teachers as advocates, the words we use, our interactions with students, and the overall classroom environment can either promote equitable classroom communities (College of Education, Strand 5) or further marginalize students. Confronting our biases and recognizing that diverse students are assets in our classrooms help educators begin to shift toward advocacy that promotes diversity, inclusion, and social justice.

So, to unpack your question, "How can I become more knowledgeable about the diverse communities I will be working in?" I want to begin by revisiting Moll et al.'s (1992) funds of knowledge. Reciprocal relationships with our students and families are key. Establishing and cultivating mutual trust "leads to the development of long-term relationships" (Moll et al., 1992, pg. 134). But, before we can talk about how to cultivate and sustain these relationships, we need to think deeply about how we come to know a community. In a more recent publication, Moll and his colleagues extended their work on funds of knowledge to examine how families, communities, and classrooms work *in relation* with one another (Amanti et al., 2005). So, you might ask yourself: Who makes up this community? What are their specific needs? How can I support community goals? To start, if I have zero knowledge about the community, where do I begin?

Earlier this year, I attended a virtual webinar series titled "Advancing Equity in Rural Education," sponsored by the American Educational Research Association's (AERA) Rural Education SIG. And if you are unfamiliar with AERA, I will do a future episode on how Division K *Teaching and Teacher Education* supports PSTs and in-service teachers. Anyway, the webinar consisted of scholars from around the world and one pointed out the fact that "When you know one rural community, you know one rural community."

And I understand, as both a former teacher and emerging researcher, becoming active in a community takes time and often requires the assistance of people who have intimate knowledge. So, who are these people and how do I find them? Essentially, you are seeking out the help of cultural brokers. The term "cultural broker" comes from the field of anthropology and the definition has evolved (National Center for Cultural Competence, 2020). Jezewski (1990) broadly defined cultural brokering as, "the act of bridging, linking, or mediating between groups

of persons for the purpose of reducing conflict or producing change" (p. 497). According to Geneva Gay (1993), a leading expert on culturally responsive teaching practices "a cultural broker is one who thoroughly understands different cultural systems, can interpret cultural symbols from one frame of reference to another, can mediate cultural incompatibilities, and knows how to build bridges or establish linkages across cultures that facilitate the instructional process." (p. 293). So, in terms of schools, cultural brokers have the potential to build strong bonds between students, families, and teachers.

Before I began my school-based research in a rural community, I sought out several cultural brokers, and each of them provided their unique perspective on the school and the greater community. Before I ever set foot in the school, I went to the local library and met with the librarian and her staff. I attended community events (e.g., tractor pulls, the 4-H fair, local charity events, festivals) and introduced myself to people. And I tend to be quite shy, so I had to step out of my comfort zone. I spoke with children, caregivers, small business owners, school board members, and religious leaders. I spent a lot of time listening to and observing people out in the community. Once I made connections with the administration, teachers, and staff at Ririe Elementary School, I narrowed my focus to cultural brokers who had intimate knowledge about immigrant students and families, both in and outside of the school.

I was fortunate to meet Daniela and Emilia, two sisters and Latina paraprofessionals who worked at Ririe Elementary School and lived in the community. Over time, I was able to establish and cultivate a relationship of trust and respect with them. I appreciated their candor as they discussed the triumphs and challenges that immigrant students and families faced in Ririe. Daniela and Emilia were the bridges between the students' lived experiences, their families' funds of knowledge, and the classroom. They provided me with an awareness that Yosso (2005)

described as “community cultural wealth” which ran counter to the narratives that the teachers would later share with me during my study. Yosso (2005) argued that “educators most often assume that schools work, and that students, parents, and community need to change to conform to this already effective and equitable system” (p. 75). The teachers, who were white and monolingual, viewed their immigrant students through a deficit lens. According to Yosso (2005), deficit thinking “takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because: (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills, and (b) parents neither value nor support their child’s education” (p. 75). However, conversations with Daniela and Emilia highlighted the value of the cultural capital of the immigrant students in the school. As former migrant workers, Daniela and Emilia brought a unique understanding to the experiences of historically marginalized communities. Yosso (2005) argued that specific forms of capital or grassroots knowledge challenge deficit thinking. And while Yosso (2005) identified several forms of capital, from my research, Daniela and Emilia were able to illuminate the value of linguistic and familial capital, which honors the multiple languages, communication skills, and cultural knowledges of culturally diverse students and families.

And while my study focused on immigrant students whose families have lived and worked in Ririe for the past decade, a recent study by Jasis (2021), examined the participation and activism of migrant farmworker families in rural California, and found that families were the “experts on their children” (p. 11), and that in order to increase equity at the local level, families “need a stronger commitment from schools in understanding and respecting their context and their strengths, and from the school personnel to engage with them in a joint vision towards educational improvement” (p. 12). What I appreciate from this study is that Jasis (2021) provides

practice recommendations of all community partners (i.e., teachers, families, schools) by suggesting 1) the implementation of an early identification system; 2) identifying what programs, organizations, and services a community offers migrant families; 3) amplifying voices and increasing agency by developing a parent council; and 4) providing professional development for educators to highlight the experiences of local migrant communities.

So, by now, you're probably hoping that I will recommend an article, book, or YouTube video to help you become an active member of your community. While I can offer a few suggestions that might inspire you, such as subscribing to the YouTube channel "TED-Ed Educator Talks" or reading an incredible book by bell hooks (2003) titled, "*Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*," I highly encourage you to do your own research prior to accepting your first teaching job. Seek out ways to meet as many people within the community as you can. Speak less and listen more. As you meet your future students and their families, think about their cultural and linguistic assets as a "wealth of knowledge." Learning *from* and *with* them, will help you to develop authentic, lasting relationships. Finally, as you reflect on your past experiences, seek out new ways to be active and engaged, both inside and outside your classroom. And to support you, for a future episode, I plan to discuss how schools have partnered with families to co-construct curriculum.

Conclusion

As we conclude today's episode, I am reminded of bell hooks (2003), who says that when we embrace an engaged pedagogy, we "recognize each classroom as different, that strategies must constantly be changed, invented, reconceptualized to address each new teaching experience" (p. 11). Thus, we commit ourselves to our students, their families, and our

community. We adopt an openness to personal-professional growth and lifelong learning by listening, thinking, and reflecting in ways that are grounded in care.

Thank you for joining me today. I hope you enjoyed the first episode of the podcast *In Community.* Please join me next time, when I invite a community organizer and activist to discuss ways that teachers can raise their consciousness about the current state of immigration in the United States And please, keep those emails coming. Until next time….

CHAPTER EIGHT. ACTIVE HOPE

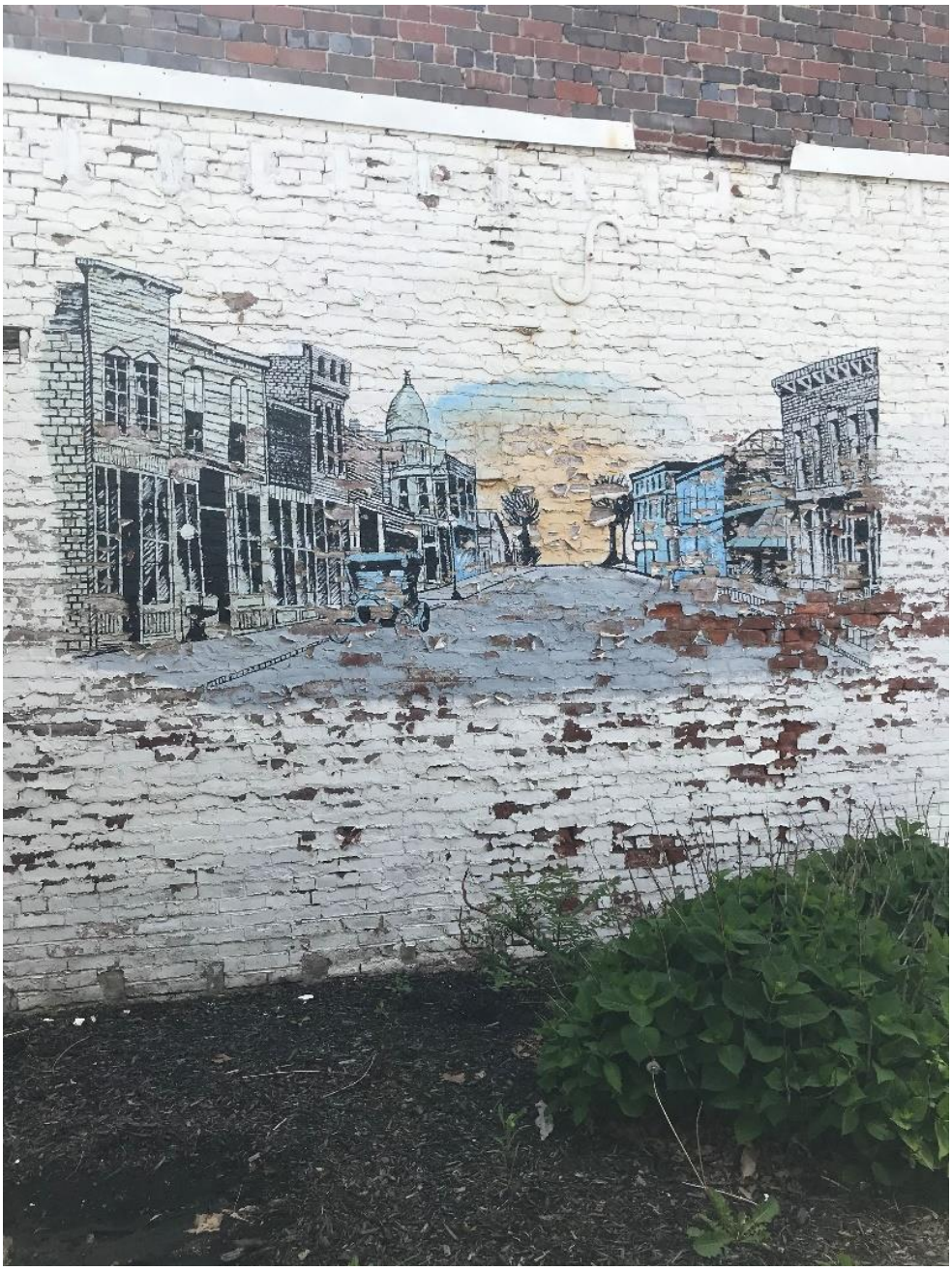

Figure 1. Ririe, Indiana

At the end of May 2021, Ririe Elementary School closed its doors forever. According to the school board, declining enrollment and reductions in state funding were to blame for the

closure. As summer break quickly approached, 150 students and 15 teachers and staff members had 2 months to prepare for the transition from Ririe to Iron Springs Elementary school for the 2021-2022 academic year.

Since the early 2000s, conversations regarding the closure of Ririe Elementary School have circulated throughout the community and when I began my research in 2019, several community members issued the following warning, "when a school closes, a town dies" and I was left to wonder about the fate of this rural farming town. On the last day of school, the community organized a parade, one last goodbye to Ririe Elementary School. As students exited the school, they were met by their teachers and families, who were lined up outside. Instead of joyful expressions, which are often associated with the beginning of summer break, dozens of students were crying, hugging their teachers and their classmates. The mood was eerily somber as students piled into their families' vehicles and yellow school buses.

As I followed the parade on foot, I made my way to the center of the town and stopped at an unnamed mural that depicts the town of Ririe nearly one hundred years ago (see Figure 1). Filled with emotions, I was saddened by the idea that the school building would now be added to the long list of abandoned and forgotten buildings that populated the town.

In the early days of summer, I began to wonder what would become of my participants. Postponing her retirement by 1 year, Linda transitioned to Iron Springs Elementary School where she continues to teach third grade. Jessica left the teaching profession to stay home and raise her son and Veronica is a full-time nursing student. Matt accepted the position of co-principal of Iron Springs Elementary School. While I wished them the best of luck in their new roles, I was genuinely concerned about the immigrant students of Ririe Elementary. How were they? What

would their transition be like? Would they continue to be marginalized? Would they encounter caring adults?

Although my time as a researcher at Ririe Elementary School has come to an end, the story continues. Throughout the summer months, in addition to reflecting on my experiences with the students, staff, and teachers of Ririe Elementary School, I thought about what it means to be an active community member and I was reminded of the words of my dear friend and community activist Hermila, whom you have met throughout my dissertation. Hermila, who also lives in a rural community, reminds her Latinx students,

> *I know you want bigger [experiences] and I know you want maybe things that are more exciting, but look at the community, where you come from and see how much it needs you and see if you have it in your heart to want to give back to it*.

My research at Ririe Elementary has taught me that care is active and that there is more work that needs to be done to support rural educators who work with immigrant students. To give back to my community, I plan to continue my relationship with Shelton County Community School Corporation by researching at Iron Springs Elementary School in the spring of 2022. Additionally, I would like to offer professional development courses for staff and teachers around culturally responsive teaching practices. For me, active hope is trying to be intentional about partnering with schools and listening to and supporting the needs of the community. By creating awareness of the experiences of rural educators in the Midwest, I remain hopeful that we can prepare future educators to acknowledge, support and celebrate the social, ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity of students.

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