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## **Yo Soy Mi Idioma: Latinx Bilinguals' Journeys To Two-way Immersion Education**

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*YO SOY MI IDIOMA*<sup>1</sup>:  
LATINX BILINGUALS' JOURNEYS TO  
TWO-WAY IMMERSION EDUCATION

by

José Manuel Becerra-Cárdenas

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctorate in Education.

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

April 2021

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Michelle Benegas

Reader: Dr. Margarita Berta-Ávila

Reader: Dr. Nadeen T. Ruiz

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<sup>1</sup> This title is influenced by *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987)

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## ABSTRACT

Becerra-Cárdenas, J. M. (2021). *Yo Soy mi Idioma: Latinx Bilinguals' Journeys to Two-Way Immersion Education*.

This study examined how the lived experiences of Latinx bilingual teachers influenced their path toward two-way immersion (TWI) programs and informed the development of their beliefs about education. This research was designed as a qualitative multiple case study, with triangulated data points including surveys, dialogues, and journals. The results were analyzed using pattern matching and cross-case analysis. Underpinned by Critical Race Theory (CRT), both LatCrit and Counter-Storytelling were utilized to add dimension to the Latinx experience, which not only takes into consideration experiences of migration, immigration status, language, and ethnic identities, but also rejects the notion that there is a linear uplift and improvement of racial progress in the United States (Corbado, 2011). The findings revealed that Latinx bilingual teachers' lived experiences informed their decision to become teachers as well as the development of their beliefs about education. In particular, it revealed a desire to position themselves as role models *con ganas* (Urrieta, 2007) in their practice, which demonstrates a commitment to improve the educational experiences of Latinx students.

**Research Methodology:**

Critical Qualitative Multiple Case Study

## DEDICATION

To every aspiring Latinx bilingual educator: We need you; *los estudiantes te necesitan*.  
To current Latinx bilingual educators: You are not alone.

“I am Joaquin” (Excerpt)  
-Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzalez, 1967

In a country that has wiped out  
All my history,  
Stifled all my pride,  
In a country that has placed a  
Different weight of indignity upon my age-  
old burdened back.  
Inferiority is the new load . . .

I look at myself  
And see part of me  
Who rejects my father and my mother  
And dissolves into the melting pot  
To disappear in shame . . .

La raza!  
Méjicano!  
Español!  
Latino!  
Chicano!  
Or whatever I call myself,  
I look the same  
I feel the same  
I cry  
And  
Sing the same.

I am the masses of my people and  
I refuse to be absorbed.  
I am Joaquín.  
The odds are great  
But my spirit is strong,  
My faith unbreakable,  
My blood is pure.

I SHALL ENDURE!  
I WILL ENDURE!

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Embarking on this educational journey and arriving to this point has been a combination of resilience, bravery, and an infinite desire *de superarme*. But most of all, I am here because of love. The love that my father, Juan Becerra Moreno, had for his family that made him leave his native country in the pursuit of better opportunities. The love of my mother, María del Sagrario Cárdenas de Becerra, that raised me and my siblings alone while my father made a living *en los Estados Unidos* and then also, leaving everything behind: friends, family, support system, to provide an opportunity for a better future for my siblings and me. *Mamá y papá, siempre estaré en deuda con ustedes por la gran oportunidad que me han otorgado y por cada sacrificio que hicieron para asegurarse de que no solo tuviéramos comida sobre la mesa, sino que también nos siguiéramos superando y no perdiéramos nuestras raíces en el camino a un futuro mejor.*

To my siblings: Juan, Blanca, Lupita, thank you for your love and for your support. In more ways that you can imagine, you are and continue to be part of my inspiration to keep going on this journey.

To my husband, Ernesto Ortiz-Diaz, words cannot express the amount of gratitude I have for all you have done for me during all this time that we have been together. Thank you for your support and constant care. For believing in me and pushing me to be better when I thought I couldn't. *Te quiero.*

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To my fellow Mechistas de Sac State: Jacky, Mimi, Refugio, Nancy H., Maribel, Ricky, Nancy P., Alma *y muchos otros*. *Gracias* for instilling in me the social justice mindset that I carry with me. You marked my journey in ways I couldn't think possible and for that I'm forever *agradecido* to you.

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To the participants of this research. Thank you for trusting me with your stories. I appreciate and value your willingness to be vulnerable and share experiences that were hurtful and experiences that reinforced your identity. I see myself reflected in your experiences and felt a strong connection with you. I hope that by sharing your stories, I made justice to what you shared with me. I certainly would have not been able to complete this dissertation without your willingness to share your stories, so I thank you.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity –I am my language.

Until I can take pride in my language,

I cannot take pride in myself.

Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*

Since 2015, I have been a two-way immersion (TWI) educator. Besides promoting bilingualism, biliteracy, and academic achievement, TWI programs provide sociocultural competence (Urow & Sontag, 2001), which entails “identity development, cross-cultural competence, and multicultural appreciation, for all students” (Howard, Lindholm-Leary, Rogers, Olague, Medina, Kennedy, Sugarman, & Christian, 2018, p. 3). Access to bilingual education in the United States “did not emerge merely for practical purposes, but rather from a struggle for language rights” (Cervantes-Soon, 2014, p. 76) advocating for practices centered on Latinx<sup>1</sup> students’ needs. Because “language is intimately bound up with identity and . . . the choice of whose language will be used in the public sphere is also about political power and ‘belongingness’” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, p. 142) in TWI education, not only is the Spanish language accepted in schools, but the speakers of the language become crucial members of these programs as well. My commitment to TWI education comes from the value placed on the Spanish language development of Latinx students, who have been historically marginalized and

---

<sup>1</sup> Latinx: I understand the controversy in regards to the use of this term. It is not my intent to impose a way of speaking on the Spanish-speaking community nor is it to impose a label to the Latina/o community. However, as an educator, I have always strived to be inclusive and be aware of who does not have a voice. As a researcher, I am doing the same in this dissertation, acknowledging there are people who do not identify with the gender binary.

their languages stripped from them for generations (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Mercado, 2001; Spring, 2018).

The commitment to social justice and equity in TWI programs motivates me to be an advocate for this educational approach. At the same time, I must acknowledge and address some of the critiques on the implementation of these programs. As it will be further discussed in Chapter 2, some scholars have brought up issues in regard to the implementation of TWI programs that could negatively impact the Latinx population that these programs are supposed to serve. Some of the concerns are the lower status of Spanish in TWI programs (Ballinger, Lyster, Sterzuk, & Genesee, 2017; Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2005; Potowski, 2007), the need for TWI programs to build structures that enable submerged voices to emerge (Pérez, 2004), the potential linguistic commodification of Spanish (Cervantes-Soon, 2014; Freeman, 2007), and the need for being critical of practices and conscious of social disparities between racial groups in these programs (Calderón & Carreón, 2001; Walsh, 1995). Gándara and Contreras (2009) argue that the challenges TWI programs face, which includes the protection of social power imbalances that can take place in these settings are outweighed by the positive effects that these programs have on increasing the academic success of English learners. However, as it will be further discussed in Chapter 2, “bilingual programs are often guided by social constructs and language ideologies that give rise to the often inconsistent, and even contradicting, perceptions of Latina/o Spanish-speaking students’ academic preparedness and abilities” (Pimentel, 2011). So, these challenges and issues need to be addressed in order to better serve Latinx students.

### **Background and Need for Study**

Currently, there is limited research that investigates the journeys of Latinx bilingual educators to TWI programs as well as the development of their beliefs about education. There

are studies on the life and institutional experiences of Latinx educators (Bybee, 2014; Ek, Sánchez, & Quijada Cerecer, 2013; Flores, Clark, Guerra, & Sánchez, 2008; Guyton, Saxton, & Wesche, 1996; Liou & Rojas, 2016; Ochoa, 2007; Reyes McGovern, 2013; Téllez, 1999); on the decision of teachers of color to teach in urban schools (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Godina-Martínez, 2010; Irizarry & Raible, 2011); on the development of their beliefs about education (Berta-Ávila, 2003; Ek, Sánchez, & Quijada Cerecer, 2013; Liou & Rojas, 2016); and on the development of critical educators (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001; Berta-Ávila, 2003; Godina-Martínez, 2010; Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Liou & Rojas, 2016; Reyes McGovern, 2013; Urrieta; 2007), but there is a gap in the research on the path of Latinx bilingual educators to TWI programs.

Similar to de la Luz Reyes and Halcón (2001), as a Latino educator, I feel “a sense of urgency on behalf of [Latinx bilingual teachers], to write a different narrative that includes [my] voice, and their voices” (p. 4). A Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework validates and centers the experiences of people of color (Yosso, 2005). In addition, the LatCrit framework allows this study to acknowledge and explicitly make connections between race, language, and identity within the Latinx experience in the United States (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). This study is looking at Latinx bilingual teachers, who have intimate knowledge about the institutional and lived experiences of Latinx in schools and society, to understand their desire to teach in TWI programs as well as the development of their beliefs about education.

Looking at the stratification of Spanish, the racist ideologies in public settings, and the negative realities of Latinx students in public schools (Liou & Rojas, 2016; Yosso, 2005), this study engages in the conversation about the need to listen to the experiences of Latinx bilingual teachers to understand what is needed to recruit and retain more Latinx bilingual educators

(Jiménez, Ruiz, & Smith, 2020) “to serve as role models, to develop bilingual education, and to promote racial/ethnic understanding and respect among all students” (Valencia, 2010a, p. 37).

This call to action from Valencia (2010a) to rectify the problem of underrepresentation of teachers of color speaks to the significance of this study.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this critical qualitative study is to explore the institutional and lived experiences of Latinx bilingual teachers that led them to two-way immersion (TWI) programs and to explore the development of their beliefs about education. By focusing on the voices and experiences of Latinx teachers, a group that continues to be underserved as students and underrepresented as K-12 educators, this study offers an insider perspective on the experiences that many Latinx students still face and how those experiences brought this group of bilingual teachers to education (Ochoa, 2007; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

### **Research Questions**

This critical qualitative study was conducted over a two-month period with current Latinx bilingual educators in TWI programs in the state of Minnesota. This study does not seek to provide pedagogical recommendations for TWI programs. Rather, the goal of this research is to bring to light and analyze the lived experiences and professional journeys of Latinx bilingual educators within the larger educational system context. I focus on the following questions:

- (1) How are Latinx dual language teachers’ lived experiences connected with their decisions to work in two-way immersion programs?
- (2) How are Latinx dual language teachers’ lived experiences connected with their beliefs about education?

## Larger Context and Problem Statement

The Latinx community, as diverse as it is, shares a common history of marginalization and racism that continues to this day (Bell, 2007; Espinoza & Harris, 2000; Gómez, 2020; Haney López, 2000; Menchaca, 1995). In fact, “the violence Latinos have suffered based on their identity as Latinos has played a central role in the racial logic of white supremacy” (Gómez, 2020, p. 116). An example of the rise on violence against the Latinx community was presented in Gómez’s (2020) study. She found that hate crimes rose dramatically in 2018 in three Texas cities with large Latinx populations (Gómez, 2020). In fact, the most recent fatal attack targeting Latinx was the El Paso massacre in August, 2019, where a twenty-one-year-old White man opened fire with an AK-47, in a city that is 80 percent Latinx, inspired by “the Hispanic invasion” (Gómez, 2020, p. 12); rhetoric used by President Trump to incentivise his political base (Gómez, 2020; Ramos, 2020). Furthermore, Gómez (2020) argues that

Thanks to a Trump presidency, Americans are more aware than ever before of anti-Latino racism. From his candidacy announcement at Trump Tower in June 2015, when he labeled Mexican men rapists to reelection campaign rallies in 2019 where he approvingly acknowledged chants that 'shooting them in the legs' was the best way to stop Central Americans seeking asylum, Trump took overt racism from the Republican fringe to mainstream retail politics. (p. 167)

Also, according to Gómez (2020), “there is no doubt Trump's rhetoric has made it more acceptable to target Latinos, but it would be wrong to assume the problem was not serious prior to 2015” (p. 13). In the 1930s, for example, “the Hoover administration instituted a program they euphemistically called the Great Repatriation, a mass forced exodus of 1.8 million people of Mexican descent, about 60 percent of whom were actually US citizens” (Hinojosa, 2020, p. 209).

In 2020, the United States is known around the world as a nation that “separates migrant children from their parents, deporting the latter and detaining in squalid conditions the former” (Gómez, 2020, p. 176). Furthermore, “. . . Latinos report an upsurge in discrimination in schools, housing, employment, and the criminal justice system” (Gómez, 2020, p. 13). This critical qualitative study acknowledges the historical Latinx experience and also contextualizes the stratification of Spanish in the United States.

Historically, Spanish has held a lower status to English in public domains, especially in school settings (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001; Ek, Sánchez, & Quijada, 2013; Halcón, 2001; Mercado, 2001; Moll, 2001, Valencia, 2010a). In the context of public education, even as our student population continues to diversify (García, 2001; Spring, 2018), the teaching profession continues to be primarily White (Haddix, 2019; Ochoa, 2007; Walsh, 1995). This creates “a potential cultural clash between a predominantly white teaching staff and a student body with high percentages of cultural minorities” (Spring, 2018, p. 175). With this study, my goal is to address the issue of the underrepresentation of Latinx in the teaching profession by analyzing historical and institutional factors through a review of the literature, in Chapter 2. Also, this issue will be addressed through conducting and analyzing dialogues in Chapters 3 and 4.

Schools continue to push out Latinx students at alarming rates (Fashola, Slavin, & Calderón, 2001; Gándara, 2009; Pérez, Huber, Malagón, Ramirez, Gonzalez, Jimenez, & Vélez, 2015; Rumberger & Rodríguez, 2010; Valdez, 1996; Walsh, 1995; Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). Yosso’s (2006) Chicana/o Educational Pipeline, or Latinx educational path<sup>2</sup>, provides a

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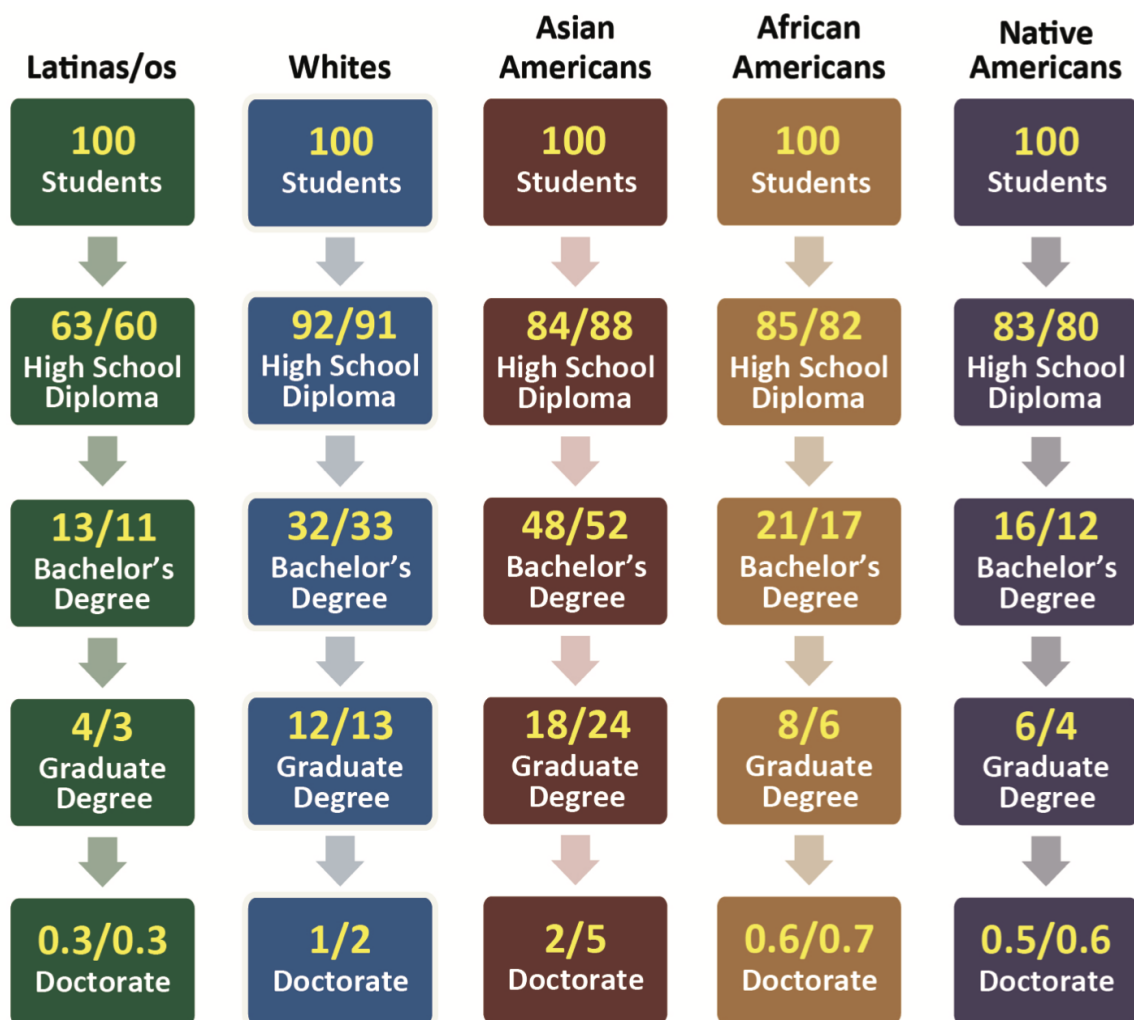
<sup>2</sup> Researchers like Ocasio (2014) as well as Jiménez, Ruiz, and Smith (2020) use the concept of “Camino” or paths to look at the Latinx teacher pipeline. Just as Jiménez, Ruiz, and Smith (2020), I believe that “the metaphor of Camino highlights the agency of those ‘walking the path’ [or embarking on the ‘journey’] instead of passing through a pipeline, as well as the twists and turns that path may present on the way to becoming a bilingual teacher” (pp. 4-5).



representation of how many Latinx students are pushed out of schools in comparison to the other major racial/ethnic groups in the United States. Ten years after the study, Pérez et al. (2015), provided the following statistics: Out of 100 Latinas, 63 graduate from high school; out of 100 Latinos, 60 graduate from high school (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*The US Education Pipeline by Race/Ethnicity and Gender*



Source: Drawn from American Community Survey (ACS) data for 2012, compiled by the US Bureau of the Census.  
 Note: The first number represents females, the second, males.

(Courtesy of the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center).

Taking into consideration this image, the fact that Latinx bilinguals choose to return to education, calls for a research approach that will gain an insight into their experiences and decision to become TWI educators. As our Latinx student population continues to grow nationwide (Crosnoe, 2006; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Garcia, 2001; Howard, Sugarman, & Christian, 2003; Valencia, 2010a; Valencia, 2010b; Valverde, 2006), this country cannot afford to neglect the dire need for the diversification of the teaching population. There is research that highlights the importance of increasing teacher diversity (Brooks, 2012; Ochoa, 2007; Spring, 2018; Téllez, 1999; Valencia, 2010a). According to Ochoa (2007), there is research that suggests that teachers of color have high expectations for students with whom they share the same racial/ethnic background. Furthermore, these educators of color “may be role models for all students who enhance educational experiences, raise student self-esteem, and decrease absenteeism and disciplinary referrals for students of color” (Ochoa, 2007, p. 7). These topics will be further discussed in Chapter 2, but they illustrate the importance of understanding the journeys of teachers of color into education. In this case, Latinx bilingual teachers into TWI education.

### **Minnesota as Context for this Study**

In order to provide a context for this study, I will share information in regards to demographics, languages spoken, academic achievement of EL students, and the growth of two-way immersion programs in the state of Minnesota.

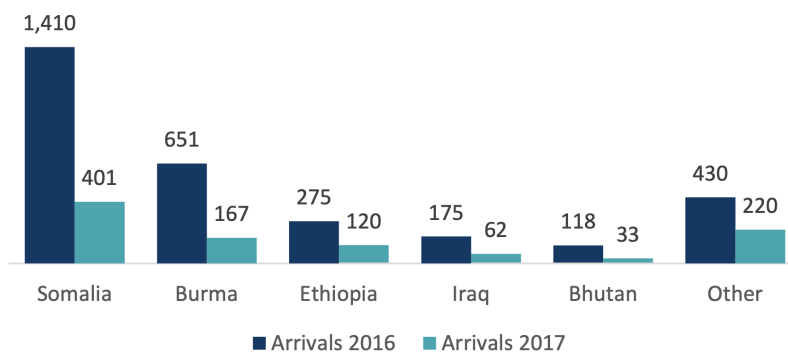
**Demographics.** According to Sugarman and Courtney (2018), "in 2016, approximately 452,000 foreign-born individuals resided in Minnesota, accounting for 8 percent of the state population—a smaller share compared to immigrants in the United States overall (14 percent)"

(p. 1). Furthermore, the growth rate of the foreign-born population in the state of Minnesota decreased from 130 percent between 1990 and 2000 to 74 percent between 2000 and 2016. “Nevertheless, this growth rate is nearly double that of the U.S. immigrant population more generally, and it far outpaces the growth rate of the native-born population” (Sugarman & Courtney, 2018, p. 1). Minnesota has a relatively small population of immigrants at 19 percent compared to 26 percent of school-age children with one or more foreign-born parents living in the United States (Sugarman & Courtney, 2018). “Additionally, about 82 percent of children of immigrants in Minnesota were native born, compared to 86 percent nationwide” (Sugarman & Courtney, 2018, p. 1).

**Refugees.** According to the Minnesota Department of Education (2018), fewer refugees arrived in Minnesota in the past year. Even though Minnesota ranked 13th in regards to refugee arrivals in the fiscal year 2018-2019, it ranks 1st on the nation for secondary migration, which makes Minnesota the highest concentration of refugees per capita in the nation (Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, 2020). Figure 2 shows the primary refugee arrivals in 2016 and 2017.

## Figure 2

*Primary Refugee Arrivals, Minnesota 2016 and 2017*



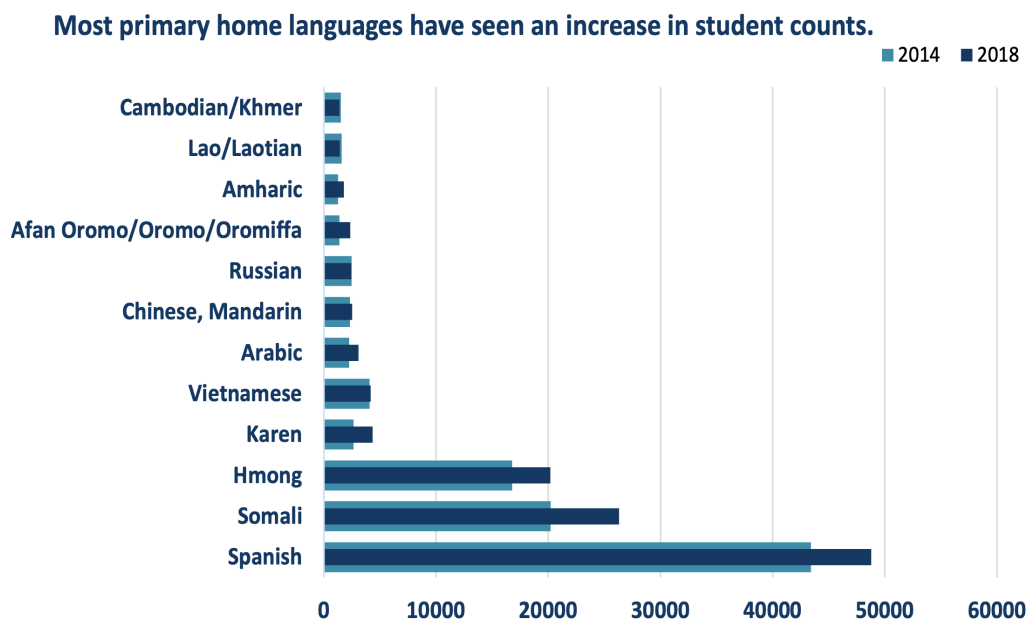
**Source:** *Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2016 and 2017*

The primary refugee arrivals to Minnesota in 2016 came from Somalia, Burma, Bhutan, Iraq, and Ethiopia “largely resettling in Hennepin, Olmsted, Ramsey, and Stearns counties. In 2017, significant numbers of arrivals were from Afghanistan (77), the Congo (24) and Zaire (33). Other arrivals have decreased by almost half from 430 in 2016 to 220 in 2017” (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018, p. 17).

**Languages.** In Minnesota 137,000 students speak a language other than English at home, but not all of them are English Learners (ELs) (Sugarman & Courtney, 2018). There are at least 260 home languages spoken by Minnesota students (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018; Sugarman & Courtney, 2018). Figure 3 shows the most spoken languages in the state.

### Figure 3

#### *Minnesota’s Top 12 Languages Other than English*



Source: Minnesota Department of Education, [Data Reports and Analytics](#)

The number of Spanish speakers in the state shows the importance of continuing to develop TWI programs that will help students keep their languages alive. The number of Spanish TWI programs continues to increase in the state, which will be discussed below.

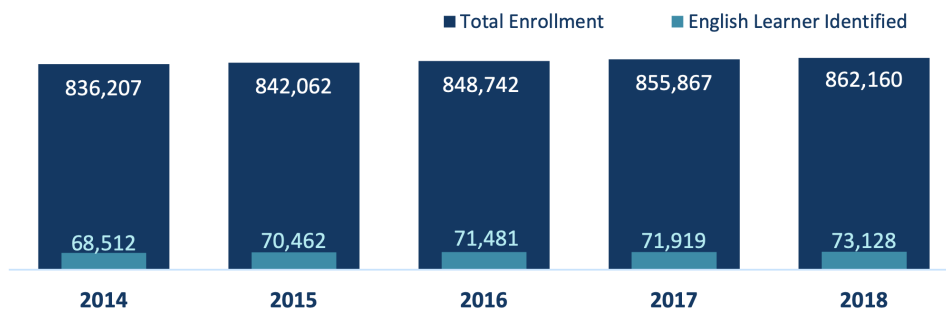
**English Learners (ELs).** According to Williams and Ebinger (2014), “Minnesota ranks 15th in the nation for the number of languages spoken by its students” (p. 4). But, according to Sugarman and Courtney (2018), not all students who speak another language are ELs. In Minnesota there were 73,128 students identified as English learners, that is 8.5 percent of the 862,160 K-12 students enrolled in the 2017-2018 school year (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018).

Figure 4 shows the incremental gains in the number of students identified as ELs in the state of Minnesota from 2014 to 2018.

#### Figure 4

*Total K-12 and English Learner Enrollment in Minnesota Public Schools, 2014-2018*

The number of identified English learners has continued to rise at a faster rate than total enrollment.



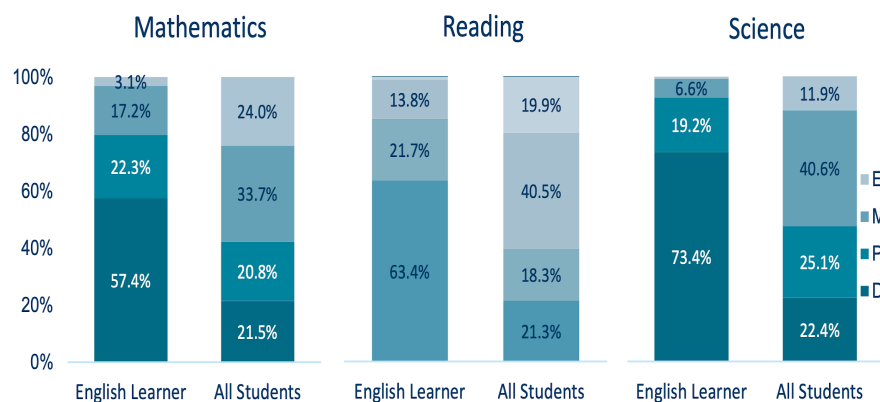
*Source: Minnesota Department of Education 2014-2018 all EL Enrollment*

**English Learners’ Achievement.** There are considerable opportunity gaps between ELs and of all students who met and exceeded the standards in Mathematics, Reading and Science.

(Minnesota Department of Education, 2018; Sugarman & Courtney, 2018). In the chart, “E” stands for “Exceeds standards”, “M” for “Meets standards”, “P” for “Partially meets standards”, and “D” for “Does not meet standards.”

### Figure 5

*Comparison of ELs to All Students on Statewide Achievement Tests in Math, Reading, and Science*



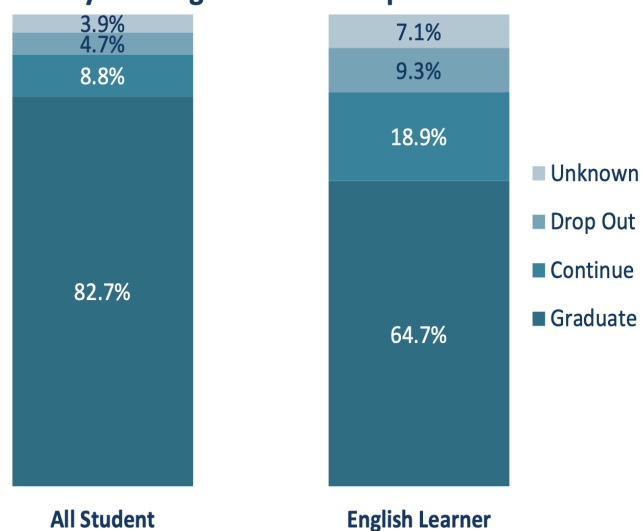
Source: Minnesota Report Card August 2018

Based on the data in these graphs, there is a clear opportunity gap between ELs and the rest of their peers. This research also looks at the graduation rates in order to determine the academic trajectory of ELs in the state. Figure 6 shows that ELs are more likely to take longer than four years to graduate or are more likely to be pushed out of school when compared to all students.

### Figure 6

*Comparison of English Learners' and All Students' Four-Year Graduation Rate, 2018*

**English learners are more likely to take more than four years to graduate or drop out.**



**Source: Minnesota Report Card August 2018**

The discrepancy between ELs and the rest of the students in regards to achievement and graduation rates is a national phenomenon (Sugarman & Courtney, 2018).

**Teacher Demographics.** The diversity of the student population in public schools, with 30 percent Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) children (Williams & Ebinger, 2014), is not reflected in the teaching population in the state of Minnesota, where “only four percent of teachers identify as people of color or American Indian [and] . . . where [t]his percentage has remained stagnant for decades” (Fetzer, Griffin, Leonard, & Thomas, 2018, p. 3).

In the two biggest school districts in the state, Minneapolis and Saint Paul Public Schools, “64 and 76 percent of these districts’ respective students are children of color while only 14 and 16 percent of the teaching force is composed of people of color” (Williams & Ebinger, 2014, p. 6). There are groups advocating for the diversification of the teaching profession in order to better meet the needs of the students in the state. For example, the

Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota (TOCAIT) was established in 2015 and has worked to pass legislation related to increasing Teaching of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota (TOCAIT Website). This work is relevant because studies show that understanding the culture of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students makes a difference (Téllez, 1999). Furthermore, the underrepresentation of Latinx teachers is a “national phenomenon that stems from historical and institutional factors that continue to skew who has access to critical thinking courses, higher-level learning, college attendance, and careers in teaching” (Ochoa, 2007, p. 7). Latinx teachers can serve as role models for Latinx students, deliver bilingual education, and help promote racial/ethnic understanding and respect among all students (Arce, 2004; Ruiz, Jiménez-Silva, & Smith, 2020; Valencia, 2010a).

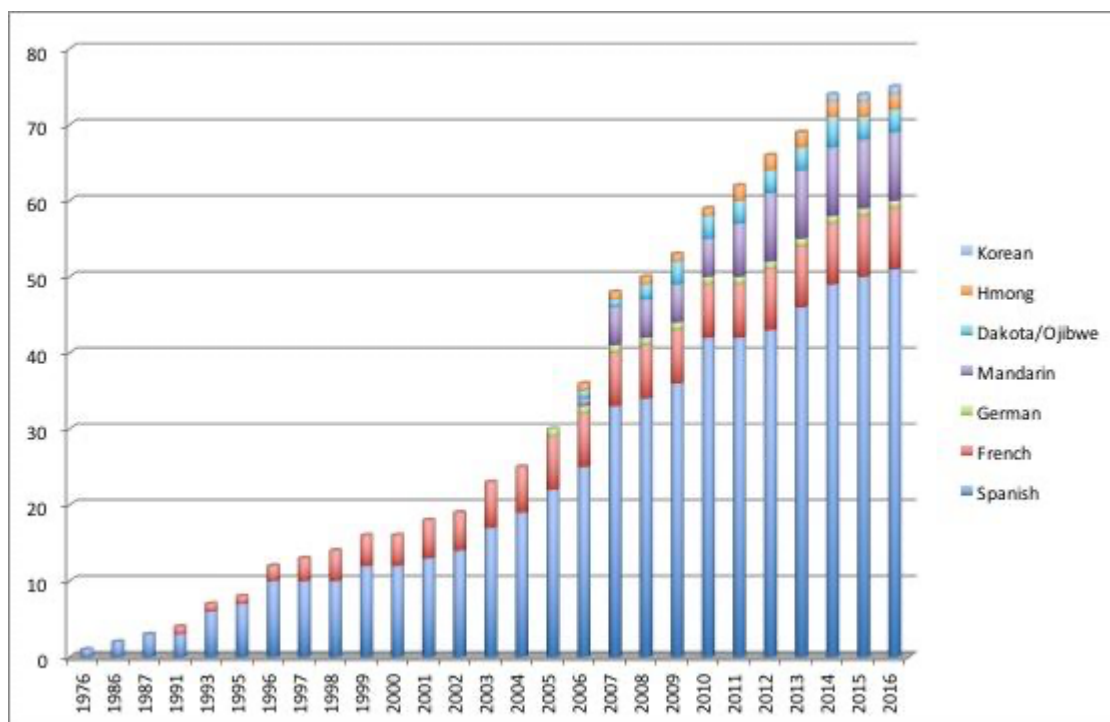
**The Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success Act.** Minnesota has the nation’s most comprehensive legislation in support of English Learners with “three principal goals for all EL students: a) academic English proficiency, b) grade-level content knowledge, and c) multilingual skills development” (Williams & Ebinger, 2014, p. 4). When the Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success Act (LEAPS Act) became law in 2014 it signaled “a shift towards more inclusive education policies that honor multilingualism and cultural competency as assets” (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). Furthermore, the LEAPS Act “sets a high bar for state policy excellence as far as support for ELs’ native language is concerned. Specifically, the law treats ELs’ proficiency in their native language as an asset to be cultivated” (Williams & Ebinger, 2014, p. 5).



**Immersion Programs.** In February, 2017, there were over 70 immersion programs in the state at the PK-12 grade levels, with an estimated 20,000 students enrolled (MAIN Website). As of 2020, there were 26 K-12 TWI Spanish programs in Minnesota, with the percentage of Latinx students in the programs ranging from 10% to 71% (Minnesota Department of Education, 2020). Figure 7 shows the growth in immersion programs in the state of Minnesota, including one-way and two-way, with Spanish immersion programs being the most popular language.

**Figure 7**

*Growth of Language Immersion Schools in Minnesota from 1976-2016*



(Courtesy of Minnesota Advocates for Immersion Network, MAIN).

Fortune and Maynor (2014) found that in Minnesota there are three types of immersion programs: 1. Indigenous immersion, in Ojibwe and Dakota, which fall under a revitalization aspect of language. 2. bilingual immersion in Spanish/English and Hmong/English, which fall

under the maintenance aspect of language. 3. World Language Immersion in French, German, Korean, Mandarin, and Spanish, which fall under the Enrichment part of language.

According to Fortune and Maynor (2014) in Minnesota, 60% of the programs are One-Way World Language Immersion programs, 13% are Indigenous/Heritage Immersion, and 27% Two-Way Bilingual Immersion. Furthermore, they found that over 50% are either one-way or two-way Spanish immersion programs. A crucial aspect of dual immersion programs is the combination of native speakers of the target language and native speakers of English.

The information on Minnesota's demographics, languages spoken, growth of EL students, and the growth of immersion programs, serves as a backdrop of this study. It shows the diversification of the student population in the state, the growth of ELs and the opportunity gap that continues to negatively impact BIPOC students. Furthermore, Spanish speakers in the state continue to grow, so TWI programs serve as an educational approach that can help these students develop their heritage language skills, while also learning English.

Historically, schools have been a place where BIPOC students have become Americanized and where other languages and traditions have been suppressed (Spring, 2018). Due to the diversification of the student population and the fact that Latinx have become the biggest minority group (Crosnoe, 2006; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Garcia, 2001; Howard, Sugarman, & Christian, 2003; Valencia, 2010a; Valencia, 2010b; Valverde, 2006), and the number of EL students continues to grow (López & Tápanez, 2011; Valverde, 2006; Walsh, 1995), TWI education serves as a model to better serve this population of students (Christian, Howard & Loeb, 2000; López & Tápanez, 2011; Umanski & Reardon, 2014; Zsembik & Llanes, 1996).

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

In this research, there is an interconnection between critical race theory (CRT) and critical pedagogy that guides the lens through which I am not only collecting, and analyzing the data, but also how I approach the dialogues with bilingual Latinx teachers in TWI programs participating in this study. The theoretical framework of critical race theory (CRT) is used to explore the personal experiences of Latinx bilingual teachers and their journeys to two-way immersion education. LatCrit is utilized to further explore the experiences of Latinx in this country, and in particular in public school settings, with language and identity. Also, critical pedagogy explores the educators' development of their beliefs about education.

### **Critical Race Theory (CRT)**

This critical qualitative research draws from the work on critical race theory (CRT) focusing “directly on the effects of race and racism, while simultaneously addressing the hegemonic system of White supremacy on the ‘meritocratic’ system” (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 27). This study utilizes tenets from CRT to guide this research, in particular the centrality of experiential knowledge in order to explicitly draw from the experiences of Latinx bilingual educators for this study (Yosso, 2006). Having CRT as a theoretical and analytical framework allows this qualitative study to also use the tenet of counter-storytelling within CRT when addressing the educational and personal journeys of Latinx in public educational systems in this country (Yosso, 2006).

DeCuir and Dixson (2004) advocate for the use of critical race theory as a tool for analyzing race and racism in education. They argue that even though some elements of critical race theory have been used by education researchers,

In order to fully utilize CRT in education, researchers must remain critical of race, and how it is deployed. *CRT* implies that *race*<sup>3</sup> should be the center of focus and charges researchers to *critique* school practices and policies that are both overtly and covertly racist. (p. 30)

CRT implies that just as race is studied, action on those findings is needed to create equitable educational opportunities for underserved students. By using CRT as a theoretical framework, it is possible to “theorize, examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact on social structures, practices and discourses” (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). Besides the tenet of counter-storytelling (Yosso, 2006) within CRT, Solórzano (1997, 1998) identified tenets of CRT that inform this research:

- (1) the intercentricity of race and racism, [when looking at the stratification of Spanish historically and the experiences of Latinx students in US educational systems];
- (2) the challenge to dominant ideology, [when looking at the progress made in the acceptance of bilingual education and TWI programs that goes against assimilationist approach to education done in the past];
- (3) the commitment to social justice, [of TWI programs grounded in equity as well as educators who are part of these programs];
- (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge, [drawing explicitly in this study from the experiences of Latinx bilingual educators]; and
- (5) the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches, [to analyze race and racism within both historical and contemporary contexts]. (Yosso, 2005, pp. 73-74)

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<sup>3</sup> Latinx, as an ethnic group, encompasses multiple racial identities. However, this framework provides an opportunity to analyze the Latinx experience as a collective group that has experienced racial discrimination. It must also be acknowledged that there is socioeconomic diversity within Latinx groups, which are the result of different U.S. immigration policies and racialization processes (Yosso, 2006). I will explore this further in Chapter 2.

As such, CRT allows for thinking holistically about the conditions of Latinx education as a context for understanding the experiences, personal and professional, of Latinx bilingual educators in two-way immersion programs (Godina-Martínez, 2010).

**LatCrit.** The LatCrit framework used in this study adds dimensions to the Latinx experience which moves away from the black/white binary when discussing topics of race and racism in this country. At the same time, with the use of LatCrit, this study acknowledges the intersectionality of race, language, and identity for Latinxs in the United States. Indeed, according to Solorzano and Yosso (2001) LatCrit methodology in conjunction with critical race “challenges traditional methodologies, because it requires us to develop theories of social transformation, wherein knowledge is generated specifically for the purpose of addressing and ameliorating conditions of oppression, poverty, or deprivation” (p. 489).

In this study, with the use of LatCrit methods, the goal is to gain a more in-depth understanding of the racialized and linguistic connections with identity among the Latinx community and the impact that institutions have on the journeys to becoming bilingual educators as well as the development of their beliefs about education. Just as Solorzano and Yosso (2001), I believe that “a strength of critical race and LatCrit theory and methodology is the validation and combination of the theoretical, empirical, and experiential knowledge” (p. 489) that Latinxs bring to this study. Furthermore, I “look to continue this methodological, theoretical, conceptual, and pedagogical journey as [I] also express [my] deep gratitude and dedicate this work to those both inside and outside the academy who share their stories with [me]” (Solorzano & Yosso 2001, p. 489).

## Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy “embodies the social, cultural, political, economic, and cognitive dynamics of teaching and learning” (Godina-Martínez, 2010, p. 6). Furthermore, critical pedagogy “views all education as intimately linked to ideologies, shaped by power, politics, history, and culture” (Darder, 1995, p. 43). Historicity of knowledge, one of the theoretical foundations of critical pedagogy, allows this study to “embrace the view that all knowledge is created within a historical context and it is this historical context that gives it life and meaning” (Darder, 1995, p. 44). This approach helps in addressing the research questions as it relates to the participants’ history and their path to becoming TWI teachers. Furthermore, this connects with the CRT framework when looking at the historical context of Latinx students in education and the status of Spanish as well.

Within critical pedagogy, the concept of *conscientização* (Freire, 1970) relates to the “process by which students, as empowered subjects, achieve a deepening awareness of the social realities that shape their lives, and discover their own capacities to recreate or transform them” (Darder, 1995, p. 49). This study is looking at how Latinx bilingual educators decided to work in TWI settings and the development of their beliefs about education, by taking into consideration the lived and institutional experiences and their impact on their decision to commit to this educational approach.

Embedded within critical pedagogy is the concept of dialogic education by Freire (1970), which informs the “theory of transformative expectations” developed by Liou and Rojas (2016) in their study. Influenced by their study, this research looks at Latinx bilingual teachers’ critical reflections of their lived experiences and their institutional memories that led them to become

teachers in two-way immersion programs as well as the development of their beliefs about education.

### **Background of the Researcher**

In order to understand my commitment to TWI education, I must acknowledge the influences that led me to this educational path and the decision to focus on this dissertation topic. My relationship with language and my development as a bilingual in this society have shaped my identity. Just as Anzaldúa (1987) stated, “I am my language” (p. 81) and I take pride in who I am as a bilingual in this country. Language has been a crucial aspect of who I am; becoming bilingual has been a transformative experience. My experience as a first-generation college student and my journey to TWI education reminded me of the following verses from Andalusian poet Antonio Machado, *Caminante, no hay camino/se hace el camino al andar* (“Wayfarer, there is no path/the path is made by walking”). In that same poem, Machado writes *Al andar se hace camino, y al volver la vista atrás se ve la senda que nunca se ha de volver a pisar* (“As you walk, you make your own road, and when you look back you see the path you will never travel again”). The path does not end with me. It is my goal to bring forward the experiences of Latinx who, like me, have struggled to find their way to the gratifying teaching profession and to empower aspiring bilingual Latinx travel the path.

In the following paragraphs, I will briefly discuss what brought me to this path of TWI education, including my experiences as an immigrant to this country, the struggles of learning a new language, and navigating a new educational system. Furthermore, I will provide examples of positive and negative messages I received during my high school years. All of those experiences have been influential to my commitment in helping my community (Amos, 2013). Just as Arce (2004), I want to explore history in order to begin a process of reconceptualization of self and the

Latinx community. Furthermore, just as I will share in the following paragraphs, participants in this study will share “. . . their personal histories and experiences as Latinos growing up in a racist, hegemonic society” (Arce, 2004, p. 241). By sharing my personal journey, and in the following chapters the journeys of other Latinx educators, this study contextualizes the diverse experiences of Latinx teachers (Reyes McGovern, 2013).

**Lived and Institutional Experiences.** I am a Mexican immigrant who came to this country in 2002, at the age of fifteen, without speaking the language. I was the first in my family to graduate from high school and pursue a higher education degree. Just as many other Latinx students (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Solorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005), my path to becoming a teacher took many turns and has been filled with challenges and struggles (Amos, 2013; Arce, 2004). Nevertheless, the journey to TWI education has made me the educator I am today and has informed the development of my beliefs about education, which I will explain further in the following sections.

In reflecting on my experience as an English Learner (EL), I wonder what needs to happen to change the overrepresentation of Latinx being pushed out of the educational system? I could have easily “wandered off the path”/been pushed out and become part of the statistics of Latinxs pushed-out by the educational system nationwide documented by several researchers (Liou & Rojas, 2016; Pérez Huber et al., 2015; Yosso & Solórzano, 2006). Yet, by arguing that resilience alone allowed me to beat the statistics would completely neglect the significant impact that teachers had in supporting me during my years in high school (2002-2005) (Godina-Martínez, 2010). But also, my community involvement through Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlán (MEChA) and the Chicanx mentors I encountered during my college years (2005-2010) (Liou & Rojas, 2016; Reyes McGovern, 2013).



Coming to this country as an English Learner and Spanish speaker was a difficult transition to say the least. Mr. O. was one teacher that motivated me to not only improve my Spanish (by taking AP classes and writing in Spanish in Heritage for Spanish Speakers class), but to use what I knew to learn English. He was instrumental in boosting my confidence in being a Spanish speaker when I was starting to feel embarrassed for speaking Spanish and not English. I graduated high school in 2005 and I still meet with Mr. O every time I go visit my family in Sacramento, California. I know that it was because of his influence that I decided to major in Spanish when I went to college. I felt this need for keeping my language alive and helping others do the same.

My parents left everything behind to provide my siblings and me with a better opportunity to succeed in life. This meant learning English, graduating from high school, and going to college. At the time I arrived in California in 2002 and started going to school, I knew I wanted to graduate and continue studying. I had no idea how the educational system worked and my parents, not having graduated from high school, did not know either. I knew I was on-track to graduating because I was getting straight A's and the credits for the classes I have taken in Mexico were able to transfer here and I did not have to retake courses. However, I will never forget a meeting with my high school counselor. He looked at my transcript and told me that I should apply to my local community college because I was not ready to go to a four-year university right away, which reflects the microaggressions that BIPOC students experience time and time again in K-12 educational systems (Amos, 2013).

Later that year, during my senior year, I was invited by Ms. G to a Chicax student conference at California State University, Sacramento hosted by MEChA, a Chicax student

organization. I had no idea how much impact attending this conference would have in my life. There was an admissions representative at the conference. He was Chicano and we chatted for some time and I showed him my transcripts. I was accepted to attend California State University, Sacramento at that conference. I know now the influence that Ms. G. had in making this happen. She knew there was going to be someone from admissions, so she invited me to the conference. Just as Mr. O. had helped me with overcoming the shame of only speaking Spanish at one point, Ms. G. showed me the impact that one person can have on students' lives. I knew I wanted to be like Mr. O. and Ms. G. and use "my education to empower [my] own community, and to generate social movements to transform society" (Liou & Rojas, 2016, p. 381). Becoming a teacher was because of the influence of Mr. O. and Ms. G. and for my desire to give back to my community and my commitment to bring positive experiences in K-12 education to BIPOC students (Amos, 2013; Antrop-González & De Jesús, 2006; Arce, 2004; Godina-Martínez, 2010; Reyes McGovern, 2013). Teaching in a TWI program combines my desire to help students keep their language alive, while also elevating the status of the Spanish language in the classroom.

I moved to Minnesota in 2012 and started my teaching program that same year. In the middle of becoming a teacher, I learned about two-way immersion education. This topic of TWI education will be further explored in the literature review chapter. As I seek to discover what brings Latinx bilingual teachers to TWI education has provided an opportunity for me to reflect on my own path into this profession. First, what brought me to teaching in a TWI program in 2015, was a desire to provide opportunities for my Latinx students to keep their language alive and for Latinx parents to feel included in education settings. By then, I had been a Latino family liaison at a middle school in a major metropolitan city in the upper Midwest and I directly

witnessed the struggles our Latinx parents went through. I helped Latinx parents navigate the educational system and provided support with translations as well.

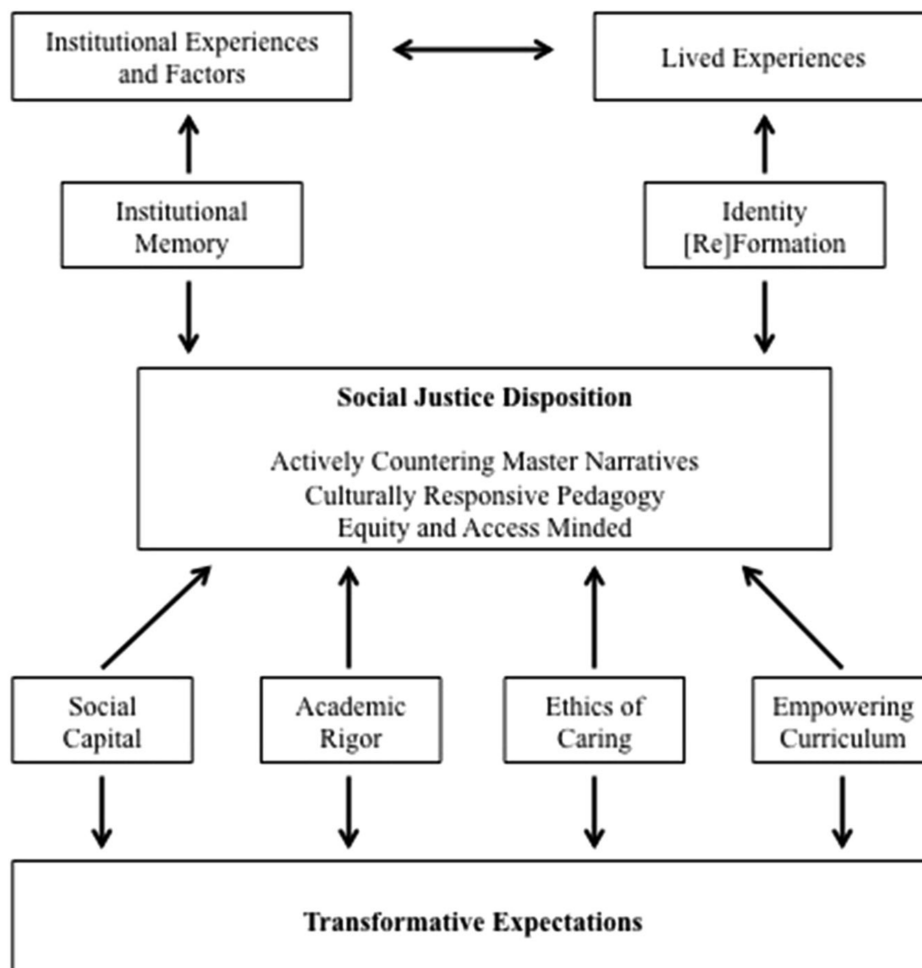
I purposely work in a TWI program because of the value given to the Spanish language and the opportunity for a new generation of Latinx heritage speakers, who are part of this program, to keep their language alive and their culture embraced and celebrated. My decision to work with my community comes from an ideological commitment to “working in counter-hegemonic ways that [seeks] to dismantle oppressive schooling conditions and advance social injustices” (Urrieta, 2007, p. 384). This social justice orientation has kept me working in TWI education outside of the classroom, as a researcher. In particular, when I completed my Master’s, my focus was on analyzing the benefits for Latinx students who participate in TWI programs. These benefits included cultural, linguistic, and academic growth. My master thesis served as a foundation for continuing to learn about TWI programs and finding ways for improvement using an equity lens. Now, as a doctorate candidate, I am focusing on the Latinx educators in these programs to learn about their journey to TWI education.

### **Philosophical History**

Liou and Rojas’s (2016) “Theory of transformative expectation for Latina/o students” (Figure 8) put into an image what I have seen as my path in deciding to become a teacher and my inclination to social justice work in education.

#### **Figure 8**

*Theory of Transformative Expectations for Latina/o Students*



(Used with permission from Liou & Rojas, 2016).

My social justice disposition has been the result of institutional experiences and factors as well as lived experiences, both shaping my institutional memory and identity [re]formation (Liou & Rojas, 2016). My politicization comes from my lived experiences (immigrating to this country, learning a second language, support from teachers) and institutional experiences (involvement with MEChA during college, taking Ethnic/Chicana/o studies courses, Spanish major) (Amos, 2013; Arce, 2004; Godina-Martinez, 2010; Liou & Rojas, 2016; Reyes McGovern, 2013). These interconnected factors, related to institutional and lived experiences, have made me the person I am today.

My professional life has been dedicated to supporting Latinx immigrants in different contexts: as a tutor for migrant children, a community organizer, a mentor for Latinx students, a Spanish interpreter for the District Attorney’s office, a Latino family liaison, as a TWI educator and currently as a Lead Teacher in TWI program. Because of the support I received from educators during my high school and college years, I have committed to being an advocate for the Latinx community in each of the professional contexts I have been involved. I am currently working to advocate for maintenance of educational programs that support heritage language acquisition and development for Latinx students. I have worked on this as an educator, researcher, and through leadership opportunities.

### **Definition of Terms**

In order to avoid different interpretations of terms used throughout this study, I will provide the following definitions:

*Two-Way Immersion (TWI)*. It is a language learning model that brings together minority and majority language speakers, providing benefits for both language groups (Christian, Howard, & Loeb, 2000; Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Potowski, 2007).

*Latinx*. For years, Latino/a has been a term used in the United States to refer to people of Spanish-speaking origin or descent who themselves identify as being of Mexican American, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or other Hispanic origin (Bartolomé, and Balderrama, 2001). Latinx is the gender-neutral form of the term that moves away from “prioritizing male or female by negating that binary” (Morales, 2018, p. 4).

*Heritage Speakers*. This term refers to students raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken and have some degree of bilingualism (Valdés, 2001).

## Summary

In this Chapter, I reviewed the focus for this study: understanding the journeys of Latinx bilingual teachers to two-way immersion and their beliefs about education. As a community that has been historically marginalized, "those injured by racism and other forms of oppression discover that they are not alone and moreover are part of a legacy of resistance to racism and the layers of racialized oppression" (Yosso, 2005, p. 75). With this study, my goal is for Latinx bilingual teachers, who have experienced institutional racism to feel empowered by hearing the stories of others that relate to their own experiences. And for aspiring bilingual educators to be inspired to continue on their path towards TWI education.

As a researcher and bilingual educator, I am answering Valencia's (2010a) call to action to rectify the problem of underrepresented teachers of color in education settings. This study takes into consideration the stratification of Spanish throughout history, as well as racist ideologies that have negatively impacted Latinx students in public schools (Liou & Rojas, 2016; Yosso, 2005). With this study, I am engaging in a conversation about listening to bilingual Latinx teachers in TWI programs to understand their journeys (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

## Preview of Chapter Two

The literature on teachers of color is extensive and intersects with a variety of topics. Setting boundaries has allowed me to determine the types of work that I review in this chapter. The focus is mostly on work whose findings and analysis connect to my research topic of Latinx bilingual educators. Much of the research examined in this literature review connects with multiple categories and, where possible, I attempt to frame research trends within a broader historical context.

In the next chapter, I will present an overview of the literature that relates to the topic of Latinx bilingual teachers in two-way immersion programs. The chapter is divided into three overarching themes: historical context of Latinx in this country, the evolution of bilingual education, and the experiences of teachers of color in education, in particular Latinx educators. These sections will set the foundation for understanding the current realities of Latinx bilingual teachers and students in schools.

## CHAPTER TWO REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Some educators, ignorant of history, will be unable to comprehend the premise that not all inequity in education is accidental, and that some of it has resulted from calculated and intentional activity to deprive some groups of their rights and freedoms.

Hilliard, 1995, p.156

This chapter presents an overview of the literature that helps to ground and expand the topic of Latinx bilingual teachers in two-way immersion (TWI) and the development of their beliefs about education. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section sets the foundation by describing the historical context of the Latinx experience in this country, with focus on Spanish as a minority language in the United States and the ramifications of that status in public education settings. The second section explores the historical evolution of bilingual education in this country and the role that TWI programs play in elevating the status of Spanish as a language of instruction and as a language relevant for heritage speakers to maintain. At the same time, this section acknowledges the need for these programs to be implemented with an equity and social justice lens in order to better serve the Spanish-speaking students in these programs. The last section highlights the research on teachers of color in public education and makes connections with Latinx bilingual educators. Combined, these three different sections look at answering the research questions:

- (1) How are Latinx dual language teachers' lived experiences connected with their decisions to work in two-way immersion programs?
- (2) How are Latinx dual language teachers' lived experiences connected with their beliefs about education?



## Historical Background

In 1999, Delgado Bernal argued that the most hotly debated educational issues discussed in Mexican communities since the turn of the twentieth century included: “improvement of inferior school facilities; removal of racist teachers and administrators; elimination of tracking; and inclusion of Mexican history, language, and culture in the curriculum” (p. 77). Twenty years into the 21st century, the same educational issues continue to affect the Latinx community. To understand these conditions and their impact on the educational attainment of Latinx students nationwide, and the lack of representation of Latinx educators, a “contextual and historical analysis that connects the present to earlier periods, and links belief systems to our judicial system and social policies” (Delgado Bernal, 1999, p. 77) is necessary. Just as Hilliard (1995) stated in the epigraph of this chapter, ignorance of history prevents educators from both comprehending the ramifications of racial stratification in this country and recognizing that educational inequity is a calculated and intentional result “to deprive some groups of their rights and freedoms” (p. 156). So, according to Bell (2007), “knowledge of history helps us trace the patterns that constitute oppression over time and enables us to see the long-standing grievances and legacies of differently situated social groups in our society and in the world” (p. 5). The topics covered in this dissertation, like the need to diversify the teaching profession, cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the historical debts of colonization, legal and de facto segregation, relocation, and racial and linguistic violence that continue to advantage Whites as a group while locking Latinx out of positions that would allow their collective, rather than token, economic and social advancement<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> This argument derives from the argument made by Katznelson and Bell on the African American community. The original quote states: “Current debates on issues such as affirmative action or reparations, for example, cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the historical debts from slavery, legal and de facto segregation, relocation, and racial violence that have advantaged Whites as a group while locking African Americans out of positions that

## Latinx [Racial<sup>5</sup>] Oppression

Considering that group identity(ies) are historical and contextual (Bell, 2007), the Latinx identity, while very diverse, shares a common history of oppression in this country. “Latinos in the United States . . . arrived in the United States under widely different conditions of immigration, colonization, or slavery over different time periods” (Bell, 2007, p. 9). Oppression is better understood in terms of social group status and not in individual terms alone (Bell, 2007). In fact, “people may affirm their group identity(ies) as a source of sustenance, pride, and personal meaning while also feeling victimized by the advantaged group's characterization of their group in ways they experience as oppressive and reject as invalid” (Bell, 2007, p. 9). It is in this context of racialized oppression that some scholars argue that the Latinx experience should be analyzed using the lens of race. According to Haney López (2000),

Race *should be* used as a lens through which to view Latinos/as in order to focus our attention on the experiences of racial oppression. However, it should also direct our attention to racial oppression's long-term effects on the day-to-day conditions encountered and endured by Latino/a communities. (p. 375)

The problem with race, argued by Espinoza and Harris (2000), is that it is “both easily knowable and an illusion . . . We struggle with its elusivity. We name and refine our categories, and then inevitably we find too many exceptions, too many people who just do not fit” (p. 445). This reflects the irrationality of the concept of race (Espinoza & Harris, 2000). At the same time, “using the language of race forces us to look to the pronounced effects on minority communities

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would allow their collective, rather than token, economic and social advancement (Katznelson, 2005)” (Bell, 2007, p. 5).

<sup>5</sup> I understand that Latinx is an ethnic category encompassing multiple racial identities. However, this study looks at the Latinx experience through the lens of race in order to focus the attention on experiences related to racial oppression experienced throughout history (Haney López, 2000; Menchaca, 1995).

[i.e., the Latinx community] of longstanding practices of racial discrimination” (Haney López, 2000, p. 376).

Racism cannot exist without race (Espinoza & Harris, 2000). The effects that racism has on non-White groups include being “more likely to be poorly housed, poorly fed, poorly educated, poorly employed, and in poor health. Beyond what we eat and where we sleep, racism injures our ability to know ourselves [ . . . ] It is a loss of identity” (Espinoza & Harris, 2000, p. 446). Haney López (2000) cautions against rejecting race as a basis to contextualize Latinx lives because in doing so, there is a risk in “obscuring central facets of our experiences” (p. 370). For example, Mexican Americans in the Southwest “were barred from local restaurants, excluded from social and business circles, relegated to inferior and segregated schooling, and subjected to the humiliation of Jim Crow facilities, including separate bathrooms” (Haney López, 2000, pp. 370-371). Even if race was seen as a black and white dichotomy and Mexican Americans were ironically considered White under the law (Haney López, 2000; Martinez, 2000), in her study, Haney López (2000) discovered that “none but the fewest and most fortunate Mexican Americans raised in the 1950s in Jackson County, Texas, could escape the grinding poverty dictated for them by the racial prejudices of Whites there” (p. 377). Furthermore, Martinez (2000) argues that Anglo Americans reformulated their white identities through the discourse of the Mexican American. And, “Anglo judges, as we have seen, did the same, ruling that Mexicans were co-whites when this suited the dominant group -and non-whites when necessary, to protect Anglo privilege and supremacy” (p. 382). So, even though the term Latinx encompasses multiple racial identities and backgrounds (Bell, 2007), this dissertation looks at the group as a collective in order to understand their historical marginalization, racial oppression, and to contextualize the topics addressed on the research questions for this study. In the following paragraphs, the Latinx

experience is discussed starting with an overview of the historical presence of Latinx in this country, the status of Spanish in the US, and the Latinx school experience.

### **Latinx Experience**

Darder (1995) argues that groups outside of the norm share a history of oppression which includes marginalization, exploitation, cultural invasion, powerlessness, and violence. According to Pearl (2010), “there are profound differences in outlook and behavior of those recently arrived and those who have been in the United States for many generations. There are important political, cultural, religious and social differences” (p. 335). Latinx in this country can include “a Spanish-speaking, upper-class from Cuba as well as a Mayan-speaking Indian woman from Mexico or Guatemala” (Bell 2007, p. 9). However, the Latinx community shares a common group experience of oppression in a historical U.S. context (Bell 2007), which will be discussed below.

**Historical Presence.** Perea (2011a) argues that the Latinx community in this country is both a colonial and an immigrant population. So, by referring “to the entire Hispanic population, and particularly the Mexican-American population of the Southwest and California, as ‘immigrants’ . . . the longevity of the Hispanic populations in this country [is neglected]” (Perea, 2011a, p. 571). Even though Latinx are seen as immigrant interlopers (Espinoza & Harris, 2000; García, 2001), “the history of Mexicans in the Southwest predates the United States and must be understood in the context of U.S. conquest and persisting discrimination” (Ochoa, 2007, p. 42). For example, the Mexican-American War resulted in Mexico’s military defeat and in the adoption of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, drafted in 1848 (Morín, 2011). The treaty intended to protect the political rights of Mexicans who became U.S. citizens (Menchaca, 1999; Morín, 2011); however, “within a year of the treaty's ratification, the U.S. government broke the

citizenship equality statements it had enacted with Mexico and began a process of racialization that categorized Mexicans as inferiors in all domains of life, including education” (Menchaca, 1999, p. 3). This is an early example of the process of racialization against Latinx which Menchaca (1999) defines as the use of legal processes to confer legal privilege upon Whites and to discriminate against people of color, Mexican-Americans in this case.

### **Anti- [Latinx] immigration**

As previously discussed, part of the complexity of the Latinx community is being both a colonial and an immigrant population (Perea, 2011a). Waves of labor recruitment and migration are “salient aspects of [Latinx history in this country]” (Ochoa, 2007, p. 42). The immigration growth towards the end of the 20th century has resulted in the reemergence of nativism in this country directed against Latinx (Galindo & Vigil, 2011). Yet, the influx of Latinx into this country is a direct result of U.S. policies toward Latin America (Morín, 2011).

In this regard, Espinoza and Harris (2000) state,

Chicanos/as belong to the land of the Southwest. The Anglos are attached to the land by law, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Similarly, Puerto Ricans are in New York and Boston because the United States is in Puerto Rico. Guatemalans are in Los Angeles because United Fruit and the CIA are in Central America. Cubans in Miami because of a century of United States imperialism in Cuba. The most effective colonialism is that which colonizes the mind and the spirit. (p. 446)

According to Ochoa (2007) “negative perceptions of Mexican immigrants can be traced back to the historical origins of white supremacy and the denigration of Mexicanness” (p. 112). The dynamics of nativism directed against Latinx will be explored in the following paragraphs.

**Racism and Nativism.** Galindo and Vigil (2011) call for the use of a different lens than the black and white dichotomy when looking at the history of Latinx in this country. In particular, “Mexican-origin Latinos in the Southwest . . . As long-term residents, they have faced discriminatory policies such as segregation, and as recent immigrants they have been targeted by restrictionist policies” (p. 162). Galindo and Vigil (2011) also urge for drawing distinctions between racism and nativism when looking at the experiences of Latinx community in this country. They give the following three reasons: First, if discrimination is only viewed through the lens of black and white racism, the current and historical patterns of discrimination based on nativism gets neglected. Second, by failing to examine the defensive nationalism that drives nativism, discriminatory practices will continue to negatively affect the Latinx community. Third, “the exclusionary definition of national identity defended by nativism will continue to define cultural and linguistic diversity as alien to the nation” (p. 162). More importantly, “drawing attention to nativism as a term, ideology, and political practice will make visible previous and current patterns of prejudice and discrimination directed against immigrants that preceeded under the cover of defensive nationalism” (Galindo & Vigil, 2011, p. 162).

Nativism is defined by Galindo and Vigil (2011) “as the favoring of native-born citizens over immigrants with modern nationalism serving as the energizing force . . . which marks distinctions between those who are inside from those who are outside of the nation” (p. 162). Nativism goes beyond personal grudges or individual anxieties, “it is a body of interconnected ideas about American government and society, about the past and future of the U.S., and about who counts as an American” (Galindo & Vigil, 2011, p. 162). Currently the targets of nativism are people of color from Latin America and other non-European countries (Galindo & Vigil, 2011).

In fact, “the violence Latinos have suffered based on their identity as Latinos has played a central role in the racial logic of white supremacy” (Gómez, 2020, p. 116). In her study, Gómez (2020), found that hate crimes against Latinx rose dramatically in 2018 in three Texas cities with large Latinx populations. The most recent fatal attack targeting Latinx was the El Paso massacre in August, 2019, where a White man opened fire with an AK-47, in a city that is 80 percent Latinx, inspired by “the Hispanic invasion” (Gómez, 2020, p. 12); rhetoric used by President Trump to incentivise his political base (Gómez, 2020; Ramos, 2020). According to Ramos (2020), “The El Paso shooting, in many ways, was the culmination of all the stereotypes society has *otherized* us with, all the barriers society has pushed the Latinx down with, and all the stigmas society has taught its members to internalize” (p. 87). In this regard, Gómez (2020) argues that

Thanks to a Trump presidency, Americans are more aware than ever before of anti-Latino racism. From his candidacy announcement at Trump Tower in June 2015, when he labeled Mexican men rapists to reelection campaign rallies in 2019 where he approvingly acknowledged chants that 'shooting them in the legs' was the best way to stop Central Americans seeking asylum, Trump took overt racism from the Republican fringe to mainstream retail politics. (p. 167)

Also, according to Gómez (2020), “there is no doubt Trump's rhetoric has made it more acceptable to target Latinos, but it would be wrong to assume the problem was not serious prior to 2015” (p. 13). In the 1930s, for example, “the Hoover administration instituted a program they euphemistically called the Great Repatriation, a mass forced exodus of 1.8 million people of Mexican descent, about 60 percent of whom were actually US citizens” (Hinojosa, 2020, p. 209). In 2020, the United States is known around the world as a nation that “separates migrant

children from their parents, deporting the latter and detaining in squalid conditions the former” (Gómez, 2020, p. 176). Furthermore, “. . . Latinos report an upsurge in discrimination in schools, housing, employment, and the criminal justice system” (Gómez, 2020, p. 13).

Neoconservatism currently fuels anti-immigrant and anti-Latinx sentiment (Ochoa, 2007). Nativism directed against Latinx “continues to reproduce their social positions as ‘foreigners’ who do not belong to the nation. Even elite Latinos . . . are not immune from the nativist refrain, ‘go back where you came from’” (Galindo & Vigil, 2011, p. 163). Leaders of nativist movements continue to depict immigrants as the most serious challenge to America’s traditional identity (Huntington, 2005; Ochoa, 2007). This sentiment has had implications in the use of languages other than English in this country. According to Arce (2004), even though a large number of school-aged children need bilingual programs and bilingual teachers, US English-Only organization has taken the lead in attacking bilingual education. There are English-only movements that have been successful in parts of the United States (Crawford, 2007; Cummins, 2000; Espinoza-Herold, 2003; Galindo & Vigil, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Hempel, Dowling, Boardman, & Ellison, 2012; Ochoa, 2007; Perea, 2011a; Valencia, Menchaca, & Donato, 2010), which will be later discussed. In the following paragraphs, the interconnection of language and identity within Latinx and the impact that language stratification has had in the community will be discussed.

### **Language and [Latinx] Identity**

Language is central to the culture of a group (Valverde, 2006). In fact, “language brings to life the group’s identity and concept of self . . . language is more than a critical part of culture; it is a necessary tool that maintains and promotes group culture” (Valverde, 2006, p. 23). In the



United States, Spanish<sup>6</sup> is a strong bond that unites the diverse Latinx community, by either their ability to speak the language or their connection to it (Oquendo, 2011). Latinx identities, as Ek et al. (2013) state, “are constructed not only through Spanish, but also through its varieties” (p. 210). Also, “in categorizing Latino/as, the ‘Anglo’ majority has emphasized this common linguistic heritage more than physical appearance” (Oquendo, 2011, p. 34). Gándara and Contreras (2009) argue that “many scholars have noted that language is intimately bound up with identity and that the choice of whose language will be used in the public sphere is also about political power and ‘belongingness’” (p. 142). Not only that but, according to Ek et al. (2013), “language has become a proxy for race in that it is no longer acceptable to attack people because of their race, but it is acceptable to attack their language<sup>7</sup>” (p. 210). This phenomenon requires to look at the Spanish language with the lens of what it signifies and represents in this nation, which include “xenophobic attitudes that accompany demographic change: the fear of loss of power and control (linguistic, cultural, sociopolitical), the disdain, particularly in the case of Latinos, that they do not ‘melt’ as other past and present immigrants” (Walsh, 1995, p. 89). The attack on the use of Spanish in public spheres, and in educational settings in particular, connects with Gándara and Contreras’s (2009) argument about the political power given to the group by allowing the use of their language in public. They argue that “if one's language is accepted, there is a tacit understanding that the speaker of the language is also accepted” (p. 142). Furthermore,

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<sup>6</sup> I understand that as Ochoa (2007) claims “as a result of the history of immigration and the generational differences among Latinas/os, there is also great linguistic diversity: Latin Americans in the United States speak English, Spanglish, Spanish, Portuguese, an indigenous language such as Zapoteco, Mixteco, and Mayan, or a combination of any of these languages” (p. 47). At the same time, the history of Spanish in this country comes from the Mexican American community that lived in the Southwest and California prior and after the Mexican-American War. This dissertation is acknowledging the history of linguistic oppression against Mexican Americans and Spanish-speaking Latinxs.

<sup>7</sup> According to Bender (2011) “In 2005 a Kansas City public school suspended a teenager for speaking Spanish in the hallway -the youth merely replied 'no problema' when asked to lend a friend a dollar. In 2008 a remote Nevada school district prohibited high school students from speaking Spanish on their daily three-hour bus ride, until the ACLU intervened” (p. 568).

when reflecting on his experience with language growing up in this country, González (1997) knew “even in [his] immature state, [he] could discern that a person who did not speak English was invisible. He or she did not exist. English was the currency of exchange for securing personhood” (González, 1997, p. 75). For González (1997) and for many generations of Latinx, Spanish was the language of family, of food, of music, of ritual; in short, of identity. It was the language of endearments to children [. . .] English was for arithmetic, for the doctor's office, for the teacher [. . .] Even though we mixed languages effortlessly, the underlying symbolism was correspondingly parallel: Home and hearth were woven with Spanish; out there was constructed with English. (González, 1997, p. 76)

This linguistic divide that González (1997) illustrates highlights the significance and role of language within bilingual education, which will be explored later in this chapter. The goal of this dissertation is “to recognize the intersection of language and race (and of linguicism and racism) as well as the complex sociopolitical and sociolinguistic realities that help frame who one is and the multiple, complicated, and dynamic nature of identity” (Walsh, 1995, p. 91). The interconnection between Spanish and the construction of the Latinx identity within the historical context of the United States serves as a backdrop for understanding the development of beliefs about education from Latinx teachers and also their decisions to work in education, and in TWI programs in particular. Staying in the topic of language and identity, the following section explores the status of the Spanish language in this country.

**Status of Spanish.** Spanish is a world language officially spoken in more than 21 countries, “which can be capitalized on, especially by Spanish speakers with knowledge of Hispanic cultures and with knowledge of English and U.S. culture” (Pérez, 2004, p. 4). Nevertheless, linguistic oppression characterizes the experiences of many bilingual Latinx in this

country where “the Spanish language has lower prestige and status than English” (Ek, Sánchez, & Quijada Cerecer, 2013, p. 197). In this regard, Perea (2011a) argues that

Sociolinguistics sometimes refer to this situation as diglossia, defined as ‘[a] situation where two languages coexist in the same speech community but differ in domains of use, attitudes toward each, and patterns of acquisition and proficiency.’ As we can infer from this definition, coexistence does not imply equal dominance, prestige, or spheres of influence. (p. 576)

The unequal dominance, prestige, and sphere of influence between English and Spanish argued by Perea (2011a) illustrates the ethnocentrism by Anglo Americans in their disregard of Spanish as a language of power and communication within and outside of the U.S. The inability to see beyond the monolingual lens continues this cycle of devaluing minority languages because of perceived lack of usefulness in the economic markets of those languages and their speakers (Pérez, 2004). “These attitudes create a sociopolitical context within which languages are extinguished or maintained in minority communities” (Pérez, 2004, p. 5).

The rejection of Spanish in this country also neglects its historical significance. For example, in the Southwest the Spanish language has existed long before the 1848 Mexican-American War (Ek et al. 2011). Yet, following the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, Mexicans living on the north of the Rio Grande suffered from overt discrimination, which included disciplining Mexican children from speaking Spanish in public schools (Delgado Bernal, 1999; Ek et al., 2011). “The oppression of the Spanish language that has existed since the colonization of the United States has powerfully influenced language patterns and Spanish-language use within Latina/o families” (Ochoa, 2007, p. 92). The effects of linguistic oppression, or what Anzaldúa (1987) called *linguistic terrorism*, must be acknowledged when looking at the

Latinx school experience in this country. In the following sections, I will explore the Latinx historical school experience in connection with topics of forced assimilation, and segregation and the Spanish language.

### **Latinx School Experience**

The United States takes pride in the idea that public schools provide every child, regardless of cultural backgrounds, with a fair chance to succeed in school and in society (Fashola, Slavin, & Calderón, 2001). However, the reality for many BIPOC students is different from this ideal. For example, the low educational attainment of Latinx students has been demonstrated by multiple scholars (Fashola, Slavin, & Calderón, 2001; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Pearl, 2010; Valencia, 2010a, 2010b; Valverde, 2006). In the state in which this study is conducted 66.3% of Latinx students graduated from high school in 2017 (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). This phenomenon “cannot be attributed solely, or even largely, to factors associated with immigration; rather it is the result of circumstances encountered in this country” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, p. 3). Moll (2001) argues that teaching and learning cannot be treated as ahistorical events. By following a cultural-historical perspective, the institutional experiences of language-minority children, which include “the devaluing of their home language and culture, or outright hostility and denigration by society . . . [are contextualized and addressed] . . . in order to create favorable educational circumstances” (Moll, 2001, p. 23). It is impossible to understand Latinx school failure without analyzing the broader political, economic, and cultural contexts (Pearl, 2010). Throughout history “there has been a political assault [. . .] on the Latino population in the United States and especially in the Southwest, that has had enormous consequences for the way in which Latino students are educated” (Gándara &

Contreras, 2009, p. 49). In the following sections, I will provide an overview of the Latinx school experience, which include forced assimilation and segregation.

**Forced Assimilation.** The United States has been described as a melting pot without giving much thought to the significance of that phrase (Hinchey, 2004). “Historically, and for clear political purposes, public schools have been responsible for the process of transforming individual students from a wide variety of backgrounds into some ideal *American*” (Hinchey, 2004, pp. 8-9). Moll (2001) states that “the most common response to diversity in schools within the United States and undoubtedly elsewhere as well, has been to eradicate it, to erase it, to ‘deculturalize’” (Moll, 2001, p. 13).

Looking at “the historical treatment of Latinos in U.S. schools reveals that the dominant (but hidden) curriculum has been about measuring and defining ‘the other’ against a mythical model American that does not now exist, and never has existed” (Halcón, 2001, p. 70). In the first three decades of the 20th century, “educators shared society's view of the Mexican American as an outsider, one who was never expected to participate fully in American life” (Carter, 1970, p. 9). “Language-based subordination has plagued Latinos in the educational system” (Perea, 2011b). In fact, bilingualism was considered a deficit and an obstacle to learning by educators (Delgado Bernal, 1999), who worked in excluding everything considered non-Anglo and unAmerican (Carter, 1970; Darder, 1995; Perea, 2011b; San Miguel, 1999; Valverde, 2006).

The schools that were established following the Mexican-American War assumed a goal of Americanization (Valencia, 2010a) that sought “to ‘de-ethnicize’ the Mexican-origin population and to remove all vestiges of ethnicity from their operations and curriculum” (San Miguel, 1999, p. 31). “Americanization for these students still means the elimination not only of

linguistic and cultural differences but also of an undesirable culture” (García, 2001, p. 50).

According to Delgado Bernal (1999) the suppression of Spanish was a strategy for sustaining a colonized/colonizer relationship between Mexicans and the dominant White society. By suppressing their language, Mexicans were degraded and controlled without the explicit use of force or violence (Delgado Bernal, 1999). As a result, “many Mexicans internalized these negative views of Spanish -and therefore a negative view of themselves and their families- in order to assimilate into the dominant society” (Delgado Bernal, 1999, p. 81). The Southwest has a history of prohibiting the use of Spanish in schools (Carter, 1970). Despite constant and loud criticism of “no Spanish rules,” schools have continued to enforce sanctions against students for their use of Spanish (Bender, 2011; Carter, 1970).

As it was illustrated in the paragraphs above, and will be expanded in the following section, the Americanization agenda “clear political objectives grounded the exercise. Americanization, fundamental to the agenda of the segregated school, served as a preventive measure that promised the elimination of cultural disintegration and political disaster that loomed within the Mexican psyche” (González, 1999, p. 58). According to Valencia (2010a), “these policies and laws were intended to ensure the dominance of the English language and Anglo culture” (p. 7). Now, I will briefly present the Latinx history with segregation in this country.

**Segregation.** Segregation of Mexican-American children was common practice in the Southwest (Perea, 2011b). “Ironically, despite the fact that California's Education Code did not even mention them, Mexican-American children were the largest and most frequently segregated ethnic group in California's schools” (Perea, 2011b, p. 602). Mexican American’s use of Spanish was seen as detrimental, so the solution to this problem was to segregate them into ‘Mexican’

classrooms and schools in order to erase Spanish and replace it with English (Carter, 1970; Hálcon, 2001; González, 1999).

One of the main purposes of this system of segregation was to isolate Mexican-American children and to retard their educational progress and access to mainstream society (Halcón, 2001; Perea, 2011b). The common practice “in district after district, [was the] English instruction via immersion and the forced removal of Spanish (and any traces of bilingualism) [that] occupied the first two years of instruction in segregated schools” (González, 1999, p. 58). According to Halcón (2001) “it is clear that a solution to the ‘Mexican problem’ was more about the imposition of mainstream ideology (i.e., hegemony) than about sound educational pedagogy” (p. 68). According to Valencia, Menchaca, and Donato (2010), the segregation of Latinx children led to school failure for many of them due to massive school inequalities.

Furthermore, “the practice of placing all Spanish-surname children in segregated schools, even though some were fluent in English. The fact that Negro children were sometimes assigned to ‘Mexican schools’ suggests a racial rather than language basis for segregation” (Carter, 1970, p. 68). This is argued also by Valencia, Menchaca, and Donato (2010) by stating that “the racial overtones of these practices were blatantly seen when Mexican American students, who did not speak Spanish, were also forced to attend the Mexican schools” (p. 86). Furthermore, according to Gándara and Contreras (2009) “nothing is more disuniting of a nation than denial of the human rights of subgroups, including their right to their language” (p. 143). The language stratification in this country connects with the negative effects that a racialized society has on BIPOC groups (i.e., Latinx). Yet, as Mercado (2001) claims,

In spite of the low social status that Spanish has in institutional settings such as schools, its influence is ineradicable, in the same way that the influence of English is pervasive.

For those of us who have been socialized in bilingual/multidialectal settings, Spanish is in our English, as English is in our Spanish, and both are an inextricable part of who we are.  
(p. 170)

The Latinx educational experience is interconnected with language throughout history. Despite the institutional practices to eradicate the use of Spanish in school settings, Latinx continue to use Spanish as a mode of communication. Furthermore, the development of bilingual education has made possible the use of Spanish as a language of instruction throughout this country. This is a response to families who are concerned about their children losing their native language (García, 2001). According to Gómez (2020), many of the Latinx population “live precarious lives, vulnerable to exploitation at work, crime victimization, harassment in the public sphere, and residence in poor neighborhood where they attend segregated, under-funded public schools, and are more vulnerable to environmental harms” (p. 176). At the same time, the anti-Latinx backlash that has moved from the Republican Party’s right-wing fringe to its mainstream center, has fueled a “renaissance of Latino activism and racial consciousness, in an ongoing cycle. Latinos as an American racial group are here to stay” (pp. 185-186). In the following section, I will describe the history of bilingual education in this country, including the anti-bilingualism movement, and some of the states that have enforced measures to dismantle bilingual education and promote English-only legislation.

### **Bilingual Education**

When documenting the Latinx educational history, Moreno and Garcia Berumen (1999) claim that it is critical to not simply document the injustices against Latinx communities. Historically, for every injustice suffered, Latinx have consistently reacted and resisted oppression (Moreno & Garcia Berumen, 1999). One example of community resistance is the



East L.A. walkouts. “In March 1968, over ten thousand Chicana/o students walked out of East Los Angeles high schools to protest inferior schooling conditions” (Delgado Bernal, 1999, p. 83). The list of grievances that these students presented to the Los Angeles Board of Education consisted of thirty-six demands, which included: “smaller class sizes, bilingual education, an end to the vocational tracking of Chicana/o students, more emphasis on Chicano history, and community control of schools” (Delgado Bernal, 1999, p. 83). Furthermore, the East L.A. walkouts focused national attention on the K-12 school conditions of Chicanxs and had repercussions on different cities throughout the Southwest (Delgado Bernal, 1999).

During the 1960s, “some educators, sociolinguistics, and Chicana/o communities created a philosophical force that openly challenged the commonly held assimilationist perspective. Chicana/o students activism focused on poor educational conditions, racist school policies, and the implementation of bilingual education” (Delgado Bernal, 1999, p. 86). As it was mentioned in Chapter 1, access to bilingual education in the United States “did not emerge merely for practical purposes, but rather from a struggle for language rights” (Cervantes-Soon, 2014, p. 76). In fact, according to Cervantes-Soon (2014), “this explicit connection between language and identity that Chican@s aimed to expose and affirm through bilingual education is what made these programs empowering” (p. 77).

For many Latinx, Delgado Bernal (1999) argues, “the right to maintain Spanish was a way of declaring control over their lives and rejecting the colonized relationship between Chicanas/os and the dominant society” (p. 87). In his study, Walsh (1995) states that parents, activists, and community leaders conceived the pedagogical intent of bilingual education as follow:

to provide children with academically challenging instruction in a language they could understand and help them learn English; and to promote native language maintenance and the development of bilingual/bicultural individuals who felt good about themselves, their backgrounds, and their future possibilities. (Walsh, 1995, p. 84)

The Bilingual Education Act of 1968, with its major goal being the transitioning to English rather than maintenance of the native language (García, 2001), only met one of the pedagogical intents that parents, activists, and community leaders sought in bilingual education. The U.S. Congress passed specific legislation related to the education of language minority students in the years 1968, 1974, 1978, 1988, and 1994 (García & Wise, 2010). In 1974, the reauthorization of the Bilingual Education Act incorporated language to include native language instruction in the definition of bilingual education (García & Wise, 2010), which coincided with the *Lau v. Nichols* Supreme Court decision held that public schools needed to provide an education that was comprehensible to students who could not speak English (García & Wise, 2010).

Because English was the only vehicle of instruction, “ELLs were being denied access to a meaningful educational experience” (Valencia, Menchaca, & Donato, 2010, p. 92). The success of [bilingual education] programs gave encouragement to the idea of bilingual education as a method of instruction for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (García & Wise, 2010; Hakuta, 1986). However, a few years later, the Bush Administration adopted with the help from Congress the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002, “repealing the Bilingual Education Act and expunging all references to bilingualism as a pedagogical goal” (Crawford, 2007, p. 145). Prior to the repeal of the Bilingual Education Act, there were constant attacks to bilingual education at the state level in California, Arizona, Massachusetts, and Colorado (Crawford, 2007; Cummins, 2000; Espinoza-Herold, 2003; Galindo & Vigil, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Halcón,

2001; Hempel, Dowling, Boardman, & Ellison, 2012; Moreno & Garcia Berumen, 1999; Perea, 2011a; Valencia, 2010a; Valencia, Menchaca, & Donato, 2010), which will be explored below following the section on anti-bilingualism.

### **Anti-Bilingualism**

Cummins (2000) argues that regardless of the empirical support for bilingual programs and that this model of instruction has been implemented in almost every country in the world, since the early 1980s there has been a constant attempt to discredit the rationale and empirical foundation of bilingual education. Pérez (2004) claims that the controversy that surrounds the effectiveness of bilingual education is really about political power, cultural identity, and social studies more than the academic performance of students who have participated in bilingual education programs.

As it was discussed above in regards to the topics of nativism and racism, Ek et al. (2011) point out that the rise of xenophobic ideologies has resulted in hostile policies, such as anti-bilingual education policies, that target the languages and cultures of students of color. The effects that these policies have on Latinx students are detrimental. These students are “left largely empty-handed, with access neither to the most effective language education, nor to an equitable education in English” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, p. 150). Furthermore, “a primary expression of nativism directed against Latinos is language discrimination” (Galindo & Vigil, 2011, p. 163). In the following section, I will review the anti-bilingual education initiatives passed in the states of California, Arizona, and Massachusetts.

**State [CA, AZ, MA] Policies.** The Latinx community have suffered attacks from different segments of the U.S. population on issues such as immigration, affirmative action, and bilingual education (Moreno & Garcia Berumen, 1999). California became the epicenter of these

attacks with the passage of three propositions: Proposition 187 in 1994; Proposition 209 in 1996; and Proposition 227 in 1998; each being “a direct assault on the educational opportunities of Chicano/a schoolchildren” (Moreno & Garcia Berumen, 1999, p. xii). Proposition 187 was an anti-immigrant bill proposed to ban undocumented immigrants from public schools (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Hempel, Dowling, Boardman, & Ellison, 2012) and Proposition 209 was an anti-affirmative action legislation (Hempel, Dowling, Boardman, & Ellison, 2012). In regards to bilingual education, Proposition 227 in 1998 prohibited the use of native language instruction to educate ELLs (Cummins, 2000; Halcón, 2001; Valencia, Menchaca, & Donato). Furthermore, “the proposition called for transitional programs of structured English immersion that was not to last more than a year” (Valencia, Menchaca, & Donato, 2010, p. 93).

The states of Arizona and Massachusetts followed the political attacks perpetrated in California against the Latinx population and passed similar initiatives. For example, Arizona passed Proposition 203 in 2000, and Massachusetts with Question 2 in 2002 (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). The relevance of these three states, California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, implementing legislation that sought to dismantle bilingual education is that together these three states enroll 43 percent of the U.S. English language learners (Crawford, 2007). It took 18 years for proposition 227 to be repealed in California when, on November 8, 2016, the California electorate voted to repeal English-only education in their state by voting in favor of Proposition 58 (Katznelson & Bernstein, 2017). According to Harris and Sandoval-Gonzalez (2017) California has seen a massive decline in teachers with bilingual authorizations since the passage of Proposition 227 “from 1,200 to 1,800 teachers annually in the mid to late 1990s to just 700 teachers in 2015-16. Consequently, today only 30 of 80 teacher preparation institutions offer programs for bilingual authorization [in California]” (p. 2). In response to this issue Jimenez-

Silva, Ruiz, and Smith (2020), have designed a study keeping in the forefront the dramatic need to increase the number of bilingual teachers, while assuring that bilingual teacher candidates emerge from teacher preparation programs highly-qualified to anchor effective bilingual education programs throughout the state.

**Minnesota.** In Minnesota, there has not been a measure to ban bilingual education. In fact, the state has the nation's most comprehensive legislation in support of English Learners with "three principal goals for all EL students: a) academic English proficiency, b) grade-level content knowledge, and c) multilingual skills development" (Williams & Ebinger, 2014, p. 4). When the Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS) Act became law in 2014 it signaled "a shift towards more inclusive education policies that honor multilingualism and cultural competency as assets" (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). Furthermore, the LEAPS Act "sets a high bar for state policy excellence as far as support for ELs' native language is concerned. Specifically, the law treats ELs' proficiency in their native language as an asset to be cultivated" (Williams & Ebinger, 2014, p. 5).

As it was illustrated above, "the education of language minority students is constantly embroiled in controversy. The use of languages other than English for instructional purposes continues to be perceived as a threat to national security or some similar un-American activity" (Calderón & Carreón, 2001, p. 127). The evolution of bilingual education has led to the implementation of two-way immersion programs that bring English-dominant students and Spanish-dominant students together (Cummins, 2000). The following section will provide an overview of the evolution of bilingual education from a *language as problem* to a *language as resource* perspective (Ruiz, 1984). Part of this section also includes a description of transitional programs and TWI programs.

## Evolution of Bilingual Education

According to García (2001), “a significant number of Hispanic students from Spanish-language backgrounds are served by U.S. schools. Moreover, this population is expected to increase steadily in the future. The challenge these students present to U.S. educational institutions will continue to increase concomitantly” (p. 59). The challenge that this growth represents connects with “the process of language policy development [in this country] embedded in one or more of the three basic orientations” (García, 2001, p. 52). Based on the historical treatment that Latinx communities have endured in the United States, the three basic orientations are language as problem, language as right, and language as resource (Ruíz, 1984). García (2001) states,

Language as problem construes the targets of language policy to be a kind of social problem to be identified, eradicated, alleviated, or in some other way resolved . . .

Language as right often is a reaction of those sorts of policies from within the local communities themselves. It confronts the assimilationist tendencies of dominant communities with arguments about the legal, moral, and natural right to local identity and language . . . Language as resource . . . presents the view of language as a social resource; policy statements formulated in this orientation should serve as guides by which language is preserved, managed, and developed. (pp. 52-53)

The evolution of bilingual education to the model of two-way immersion in this country connects with the development of these basic orientations in regards to language. In fact, two-way immersion education programs are characterized by a *language as resource* orientation that sees languages other than English as resources to be developed and not as problems to be overcome (Freeman, 2007; Ruiz, 1984). Furthermore, two-way immersion education, as another model of

bilingual education, has an opposite approach than transitional bilingual education (Freeman, 2007). Many educators have advocated for two-way bilingual immersion as an enrichment model of language education (Pérez, 2004). This is based on the greater level of effectiveness that maintenance bilingual models have over transitional bilingual models (Pérez, 2004). In the following section, I will briefly describe transitional bilingual programs and how it connects to the language as problem orientation.

**Transitional Bilingual Programs.** The orientation that focuses on resolving problems associated with language learning or linguistic diversity is *language as problem* (Cummins, 2000; Ruiz 1984). In fact, Cummins (2000) argues that “provision of transitional bilingual education programs in the United States illustrates this orientation. The goal is to solve the ‘problem’ associated with the fact that children enter school not speaking the usual language of instruction in school” (p. 171). In the case of Spanish-speaking Latinx students, transitional programs provide instruction in Spanish with the goal of switching solely to English as soon as possible (Cummins, 2000; Christian & Genesee, 2001). Usually, students are given three years to learn English while using Spanish to help during instruction (Pérez, 2004).

Transitional bilingual education is the most common form of bilingual education in this country (Christian & Genesee, 2001), which is based in a subtractive theory of language learning (Pérez, 2004). For example, in California, these programs operate as schools within a school or a schoolwide program, depending on the number of students being served (Saunders & Goldenberg, 2001). In the case of Texas, schools have enforced subtractive language policies forcing students to give up their native languages in favor of English (Pérez, 2004). Cummins (2001) argues that simply providing some first language instruction will not transform students’ educational experience.

In the case of Latinx students, bilingual education has the potential to provide better educational experiences for them. However, “the predominant model of bilingual education implemented in the United States (quick-exit transitional programs) is inferior to programs that aim to develop bilingualism and biliteracy, such as developmental (late-exit) and two-way bilingual immersion (dual-language)” (p. 203). Ruiz (1984) argues that greater emphasis should be placed on the language as resource orientation “in which linguistic diversity is seen as a societal resource that should be nurtured for the benefit of all groups within the society” (Cummins, 2000, p. 171). Following this connection between two-way immersion education and language as resource orientation, I will overview TWI education and its benefits for Latinx students.

**Two-Way Immersion (TWI) Education.** Besides promoting bilingualism (Cervantes-Soon, 2014; Cummins, 2000; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Goldenberg, 1996; Rodriguez, 1999; López & Tápanes, 2011; Pérez, 2004; Umansky & Reardon, 2014; Valentino & Reardon, 2015), biliteracy (Cummins, 2000; Pérez, 2004), and academic achievement (Fortune & Mayor, 2014; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Genesse, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006; Lindholm-Leary & Block, 2010; Marian, Shook, & Schroeder, 2013; Urow & Sontag, 2001; Valentino & Reardon, 2015), TWI programs provide sociocultural competence (Freeman, 2007; Freeman, Freeman & Mercuri, 2005; Urow & Sontag, 2001), which entails “identity development, cross-cultural competence, and multicultural appreciation, for all students” (Howard et al., 2018, p. 3). Language minority and language majority students participate and learn from each other in the same classroom (Calderón & Carreón, 2001; Carter, 1970; Cummins, 2000; Pérez, 2004).

One of the characteristics of TWI programs is the balance between the number of English speakers and speakers of the target language, Spanish in this case (Freeman, 2007). These



programs “provide content-area instruction through both languages to all students in integrated classes” (Freeman, 2007, p. 7). These programs “seek to add a language to a student's repertoire while maintaining the language(s) the student brings to school, so that both languages are used for instruction for an extended period” (Christian & Genesee, 2001, p. 2). Furthermore, TWI programs “sometimes referred to as *bilingual immersion*, *dual-language immersion*, *two-way immersion*, or *two-way bilingual programs*, . . . combine the best features of immersion education for English speakers and of one-way developmental bilingual programs for ELLs” (Freeman, 2007, p. 7).

As it was previously discussed, the Latinx population has suffered linguistic isolation, something that TWI programs are helping to reduce (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). These programs have the potential to expand even further considering the consistent change in demographics and needs of our society in the United States (Howard, Sugarman, & Christian, 2003). In particular, Spanish TWI programs have continued to grow “over the past three decades, . . . from fewer than five to 261 programs in 24 states” (Freeman, 2007, p. 7). Moreover, Ovando and Collier (1985) maintain that TWI programs may be the only way to reduce language segregation in desegregated schools. This is because “two-way bilingual education is a model in which students of two different language backgrounds (e.g., Spanish and English speakers) are brought together in a bilingual class setting in order for both groups to become truly ‘bilingual’” (Valencia, Menchaca, & Donato, 2010, p. 103).

This brief introduction to TWI education will be further discussed in the following section. In particular, topics like the status of Spanish language in these programs, the need to remain critical in practices implemented in these programs, and the importance of staying committed to social justice and equity work.

### **What is Different about Two-Way Immersion Education?**

Language is bound up with identity and the choice of whose language will be used connects with political power and belongingness (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). The use of Spanish as language of instruction and the honoring of minority cultures by incorporating them into the curriculum is one of the ways TWI education has worked in elevating the status of language and culture of the Latinx population (Freeman, Freeman & Mercuri, 2005; Hinchey, 2004). In fact, “the rationale for these programs is not only academic achievement in two languages but also cross-cultural understanding as a benefit of positive interactions in the classroom” (Calderón & Carreón, 2001, p. 128).

Valencia, Menchaca, and Donato (2010) state that “two-way bilingual education appears to be the only model that places and sensitizes English speakers in a second language learning environment; it also stresses linguistic integration in the classroom” (pp. 103-104). Moreover, by using a *language as resource* orientation, these programs “have eased tensions between groups who speak different languages . . . [TWI programs] have helped build cross-cultural school communities and cross-cultural friendships among students and parents, relationships that probably would not have developed without these programs” (Freeman, Freeman & Mercuri, 2005, p. xv).

In summary, the goal of Spanish TWI programs is to support English development and native-language maintenance for Spanish-speaking Latinx students while simultaneously offering English-speaking students the opportunity to acquire another language in the same classroom (Cervantes-Soon, 2014). This goal is “in concert with the notion of actively promoting cultural diversity, with a healthy academic respect for the linguistic and cultural attributes for the

diverse students involved” (García, 2001, p. 142). In the following paragraphs, some of the concerns surrounding TWI education will be discussed.

### **Concerns within TWI Programs**

Scholars have brought up issues in regard to the implementation of TWI programs that could negatively impact the Latinx population that these programs are supposed to serve. Some of the concerns are the lower status of Spanish in TWI programs (Ballinger, Lyster, Sterzuk, & Genesee, 2017; Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2005; Potowski, 2007), the need for TWI programs to build structures that enable submerged voices to emerge (Pérez, 2004), the potential linguistic commodification of Spanish (Cervantes-Soon, 2014; Freeman, 2007; Pimentel, 2011), and the need for being critical of practices and conscious of social disparities between racial groups in these programs (Calderón & Carreón, 2001; Walsh, 1995). Gándara and Contreras (2009) argue that the challenges TWI programs face, which includes the protection of social power imbalances that can take place in these settings, are outweighed by the positive effects that these programs have on increasing the academic success of English learners. However, as it will be discussed below, “bilingual programs are often guided by social constructs and language ideologies that give rise to the often inconsistent, and even contradicting, perceptions of Latina/o Spanish-speaking students’ academic preparedness and abilities” (Pimentel, 2011, p. 336). In fact, in the context of some bilingual programs, “the racialization of the Spanish language signifies Spanish as a deficiency in one context [remedial bilingual] and then as a commodity in another context [two-way dual language]” (Pimentel, 2011, p. 351). So, the challenges and issues within TWI education need to be addressed in order to better serve Latinx students. In the following paragraphs, the status of Spanish in TWI programs, the potential to linguistic commodification, and the need to remain critical of practices will be discussed.

**Status of Spanish in TWI Programs.** TWI programs raise the status of the second language (in this case, Spanish) so that it is equal to English (Valverde, 2006). However, Potowski (2007) found that a struggle in TWI programs is the preference to use English, “where students from minority-language and majority-language households learn together and is evident regardless of students’ language background, probably reflecting the high status and generally broad usage of English outside school” (Ballinger, Lyster, Sterzuk, & Genesee, 2017, p. 32). According to Pimentel (2011)

The racialization of the English language signifies English as an elite and academic language as well as a prerequisite for academic achievement . . . [which places] . . . English-speaking students’ experiences and achievement at the center of school practices and consequently as shaping Latina/o, emerging bilingual students’ schooling experiences. (p. 351)

Freeman, Freeman, and Mercuri (2005) also found that even in TWI programs, students understand that English is the language of power “when teachers or students code-switch, it is usually from Spanish into English. Seldom have researchers found frequent code-switching into Spanish during English instructional time” (Freeman, Freeman & Mercuri, 2005, p. 72).

This is a concern brought in their study by Jong and Howard (2009) because “these programs aim to offer equitable linguistic support for both majority and minority language speakers” (Ballinger, Lyster, Sterzuk, & Genesee, 2017, p. 32). In order to develop the heritage language and the culture of the students as well the national language and culture, TWI programs need to build structures that would enable submerged voices to emerge (Pérez, 2004).

**Linguistic Commodification.** In her study, Cervantes-Soon (2014) calls for the need to be critical of the ways TWI programs are implemented. For example, she claimed that “we take

the risk of replicating [a] predatory culture by welcoming the languages of minority children, but not the entire child, with all of her complexities, needs, wants, and knowledge” (Cervantes-Soon, 2014, p. 73). In fact, with the influence that current globalized and neoliberal trends have on shaping communities, TWI programs can

serve to commodify Latin@s’ linguistic resources. Thus, without a vigilant implementation of TWI programs and strong advocacy efforts, these contexts might lead to an increased reliance on the language of neoliberalism, an overemphasis on appealing to the dominant group, and the reinscription of the unequal power relations between majority and minority groups deeply rooted in U.S. society. (Cervantes-Soon, 2014, p. 65)

This argument connects with Gándara & Contreras’s (2009) critique of TWI programs.

According to them, TWI programs often ignore or reinforce pre-existing disparities in social status between non-English speaking students and parents and those from the dominant language and economic group. The call to be critical of TWI program implementation comes from scholars like Cervantes-Soon (2004) who argue that these programs must meet the diverse needs of students at the same time that it works in integrating linguistically diverse communities, who come from different socioeconomic backgrounds. In this regard, Pimentel (2011) argues that it is crucial for educators to be critical of “the way in which two-way dual-language programs may operate from a Whiteness frame of reference” (p. 351). Furthermore, Pimentel (2011) advocates for the Latinx students who are members of these programs and asks educators to “take special care to ensure that students’ minority languages are perceived as valuable academic resources and important cultural reflections of students’ identities regardless of White, English-speaking students’ (non)involvement in bilingual programs” (pp. 351-352). These issues are connected

with the historical politics of identity of Latinx communities (Calderón & Carreón, 2001) and need to be a point of reference in the implementation of these programs.

**Remain Critical of Practices.** According to multiple studies, TWI programs promote academic achievement (Fortune & Mayor, 2014; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Genesse, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006; Lindholm-Leary & Block, 2010; Marian, Shook, & Schroeder, 2013; Urow & Sontag, 2001; Valentino & Reardon, 2015). However, Freeman (2007) argues that educators must remain vigilant and ensure that their TWI programs provide Spanish speakers with the opportunities they need to reach equally high standards in their content-area classes as their White middle-class standard-English speakers. This resonates with Calderón and Carreón's (2001) argument that "if a school's program results indicate that English-dominant students outperform Spanish speakers on Spanish tests or any similar inconsistency, this merits careful analysis so that the issue can be addressed" (p. 129). Failure to critically evaluate the programs will result in Spanish speaking students being exploited for their Spanish resource that they offer to English-speaking students (Freeman, 2007).

In addition to the potential academic achievement disparity within TWI programs, another concern is the level of Spanish students are taught. For instance, Freeman (2007) found that "Spanish speakers may not develop high levels of academic Spanish in dual language classrooms because teachers are teaching native English speakers as well as native Spanish speakers, and, therefore, may be watering down the Spanish they use for instruction" (p. 70). Besides being critically evaluating TWI programs, "a basic step in becoming a more critical teacher is reflective thought -thinking and re-thinking about what we believe, what we do, and how and why we do it" (Walsh, 1995, p. 81). This process requires an examination of teachers'

understanding and vision of society and schools (Walsh, 1995), which relates to the focus of this study: the development of Latinx teachers' beliefs about education based on experiences.

According to Park (1995) being critical can have a negative connotation. However, “this negativity is not the end but a step toward the realization of a positive goal. Critique only arises from the conflict between a vision and the reality that contradicts it, [and] the potential for moving the latter toward the former” (Park, 1995, p. 27). Furthermore, “any struggle for cultural and linguistic democracy must center on the formation of bicultural identity and the development of voice in students of color who attend public schools” (Darder, 1995, p. 35). In order to transform the current conditions of inequities, even in TWI programs, stakeholders need to understand the historical and political dimensions that have shaped the world as we know it today (Darder, 1995).

**Social Justice and Equity Commitment.** An issue brought up by both Reciento (2005) and Cervantes-Soon (2014) is that the ideas of social justice and equity and the importance of social identities in language development are dismissed when TWI programs are approached with a neutral lens. Furthermore, “it could be argued that while WLE [World Language Education] may help TWI raise the status of minority languages, the apolitical presumptions make TWI prone to an emphasis limited to technocratic linguistic domains” (Cervantes-Soon, 2014, p. 72).

According to Freeman, Freeman and Mercuri (2005) it is critical that all stakeholders have an understanding of how their TWI program works at their school site and that there is flexibility in its implementation. Also, “all school personnel must be committed to academic and social equity and the promotion of equal status for both languages” (p. 69). Freeman, Freeman and Mercuri (2005) recognize the difficulty in developing a program that provides equality in

academics, social status, and language status. However, they argue that “equity issues cannot be ignored if the goals of dual language, including high academic achievement for all, development of bilingualism and biliteracy, and demonstrations of positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors, are to be achieved” (Freeman, Freeman & Mercuri, 2005, p. 69). In regards to achieving equity in education, Potowski (2007) states

Equity is also difficult to achieve when the curriculum, acceptable knowledge, and notions of success have already been defined by Eurocentric cultural values . . . and reflected in the languages, experiences, and cultural capital valued by the school and outside community and by current accountability measures. This context generates issues of power, which play an important role in what happens in the classroom, as well as in the shaping of students’ identities and social positions. (p. 67)

Pérez (2004) argues that TWI programs have the potential for transforming coercive relations of power into collaborative relations when both majority and minority parent and community groups . . . see the development of linguistic assets as a potential that might result in future educational, social, and economic benefits” (Pérez, 2004, p. 20). It is not enough to focus on bilingualism, biliteracy, and academic achievement with regards to the outcomes of TWI education. In doing so, it “may blur critical issues of equity that could continue to disadvantage Latin@ children despite well-intended efforts” (Cervantes-Soon, 2014, p. 64). One of the ways in which these issues of equity and social justice can stay at the forefront of the implementation of TWI programs is by knowing the communities these programs serve (August & Hakuta, 1998) and “not finding one program type that works at every school for all students but designing a program based on student needs and community resources” (Valverde, 2006, p. 92). And, as it is argued by Moreno and Garcia Berumen (1999) “we must collectively push to transform the way



opportunities are structured so that educational systems cease to serve and perpetuate the racial and economic hierarchies both inside and outside our communities” (p. xiii).

The evolution of bilingual education into what is known as two-way immersion education has proven successful in educating Latinx students and in the development of two languages (Cervantes-Soon, 2014; Cummins, 2000; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Goldenberg, 1996; Rodriguez, 1999; López & Tápanes, 2011; Pérez, 2004; Umansky & Reardon, 2014; Valentino & Reardon, 2015). At the same time, there are areas of growth brought forward by different researchers in which TWI programs can better serve the Latinx community (Cervantes-Soon, 2014; Freeman, 2007; Reciento, 2005).

In the following section, the literature review focuses on the topic of teachers of color. I will center my review mostly on findings and analysis connected to my topic of Latinx bilingual teachers. Taking into consideration the historical context of Latinx educational experience in the United States and the stratification of the Spanish language in public schools, this section will make connections between those topics and the experiences of Latinx bilingual teachers.

### **Teachers of Color**

Even as our student population continues to diversify (Crosnoe, 2006; Freeman, Freeman & Mercuri, 2005; García, 2001; Ochoa, 2007; Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2016; Spring, 2018; Valencia, 2010b), the teaching profession continues to be primarily White (García & Wise, 2010; Haddix, 2019; Ochoa, 2007; Walsh, 1995). This creates “a potential cultural clash between a predominantly white teaching staff and a student body with high percentages of cultural minorities” (Spring, 2018, p. 175). In fact, according to Hinchey (2004) the White norms ingrained in education “at every level generate significant barriers that maintain the current racial imbalance in the teaching force. It is these culturally constructed barriers, and not lack of

interest, that largely account for the scarcity of non-mainstream teachers” (p. 31). Ochoa (2007) claims that, according to research, the importance of increasing teacher diversity is because “teachers of color often have high expectations for students of their same racial/ethnic background” (p. 27). Also, culturally relevant educators “consciously make use of their experiential knowledge to connect students to both educational content and the social contexts in which they live (Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019, p. 66). Hinchey (2004) argues that people of color are attracted to teaching to make a substantial difference in their communities, despite “hindrances as low regard for the teaching profession, high costs of college tuition, lack of role models, and high school tracking” (p. 31). Haddix (2007) suggests that in order to successfully target the decline in enrollment in teacher preparation programs and the lack of teacher diversity there needs to be a “real consideration for the potential of a racially and linguistically diverse teacher force to transform schools and communities” (p. 143).

Because the White template that most public schools are based on do not apply nor interest many minority students (Hinchey (2004), some successful minority students “pursue teaching, hoping they will be able to help create schools more attuned to the students who people them” (Hinchey, 2004, p. 34). Taking into consideration the current social and educational climate in the United States, Jackson and Knight-Manuel (2019) claim that “there is a need for educators of color to disrupt the potentially harmful social realities their students of color confront and the impact of those realities on schooling experiences” (p. 65). Furthermore, they claim that both the culturally relevant pedagogies and the personal experiences of educators of color “negotiating school structures can be invaluable assets to all students, especially students of color” (p. 66). This is because teachers of color had to develop strategies to navigate, subvert and

counter the dominant culture of schooling in order to become professional educators and this knowledge can sometimes become part of their pedagogy (Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019).

### **Minnesota Teacher Demographics**

The trends in lack of diversity nationwide are also reflected in the state of Minnesota. The diversity of the student population in public schools, with 30 percent children of color (Williams & Ebinger, 2014), is not reflected in the teaching population in the state, where “only four percent of teachers identify as people of color or American Indian [and] . . . where [t]his percentage has remained stagnant for decades” (Fetzer, Griffin, Leonard, & Thomas, 2018, p. 3). Looking at the biggest school districts in the state, Minneapolis and Saint Paul Public Schools, “64 and 76 percent of these districts’ respective students are children of color while only 14 and 16 percent of the teaching force is composed of people of color” (Williams & Ebinger, 2014, p. 6).

### **White Educators**

The teaching force is primarily white, female, and monolingual English speaking (Valverde, 2006). In fact, “the vast majority of teachers and administrators are White and speak English as their native and only language” (García & Wise, 2010, p. 149). One of the implications of this lack of racial and linguistic diversity in education is that “the lens through which students are encouraged to read the world is largely White, monolingual, and middle class” (Haddix, 2017, p. 142). This reality, according to Walsh (1995) raises the question about this country’s commitment to and concern about the future. Such reality “speaks to the need to re-consider, re-define, and re-work the social vision (and the identity) of the United States, as well as the nature and shape of its socializing institutions, particularly schools” (Walsh, 1995, p. 82).

Izarry and Raible (2011) claim that the disconnect between a largely Anglo teaching force and the diverse and multilingual students can cause an interruption “in the flow of accurate information from students’ families and communities to their teachers. [The lack of understanding in] the sociocultural realities of their students’ lives or the ways that schooling can help or hinder the realization of students’ aspirations” (p. 188). At the same time, according to Haddix (2017) “teachers of color are not supermen or superwomen—it is not their responsibility alone to fix the problems with the education system that affect . . . education” (p. 145). Furthermore, any goal to improve education for all students “must involve a close look at the educators charged with delivering . . . curriculum with equity-minded, culturally relevant, and anti-racist pedagogies” (Haddix, 2017, p. 142).

The call for diversifying the teaching profession has been explored by multiple scholars (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019; Haddix, 2017; Hinchey, 2004; Izarry & Raible, 2011; Spring, 2018). Téllez (1999) explores the implications to the argument that teachers of color are more successful than European-American teachers in educating students of color. Téllez (1999) argues that “to say that teacher ethnicity must match student ethnicity suggests that ‘white’ teachers cannot or should not be teaching children of color” (Téllez, 1999, p. 557). It is not the intent of this study to claim that only teachers of color can educate students of color (Bristol & Martin-Fernandez, 2019; Téllez, 2019). Again, it is a collective effort that includes both White and educators of color to challenge inequities in education.

As it will be discussed in the following paragraphs and to engage in the discussion of the need to diversify the teaching profession, I will explore some of the literature that claims that being a person of color does not automatically make teachers conscious and critical of racist and

systemic practices negatively affecting students of color (Berta-Ávila, 2004; Godina-Martínez, 2010; Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019; Kohli, 2012; Matias & Liou, 2014).

### **Not All Teachers of Color are Critical**

Téllez (1999) argues that “given the nearly limitless cultural interchanges in the process of schooling, we might expect that when teachers and students share culture, schooling will be more successful” (p. 558). However, according to Carter (1970) more than sharing the same racial/ethnic background, students need educators who have “the ability to understand, to accept, empathize with, and constructively cope with individual and cultural diversity (p. 118). In his study, he found that “Spanish-surname teachers generally subscribe to the views of Anglo teachers. Even the racist position finds a few adherents who assume that the degree of Indian blood in an individual influences his intellectual capacity” (p. 118). Those findings made the fact that the teachers were of Mexican descent inconsequential to their effectiveness in teaching Mexican-American students (Téllez, 1999).

In connection with Carter’s (1970) findings, Jackson and Knight-Manuel (2019) caution against the assumption that educators of color innately possess the abilities “to be intentional in pedagogical and personal interactions with students of color in ways that support their academic achievement” (p. 67). In fact, according to the researchers, this assumption “dangerously generalizes and frames all teachers of color within [a] discourse [of teaching for social justice] and potentially limits the extent to which teacher education programs can foster practices to help develop such commitments in all teacher candidates” (Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019, p. 67). Furthermore, such assumptions “that teachers of color enter the profession with the intent to redress issues of educational inequity can impede their preparation to actually do so” (Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019, p. 67).

Even though the presence of teachers of color can be crucial in the holistic success of students of color, not all teachers of color are culturally competent to serve in multicultural classrooms and to promote racial justice or address inequities (Kohli, 2012). In their study, Matias and Liou (2014) found that,

Often teachers of color too can fall victim to the ideology of colorblindness as their upward class status becomes the buffer that distinguishes their lived realities from those of their students. Furthermore, urban schooling can be colonizing projects that subject students of color to an onslaught of deficit practices that reifies structural racism, hegemonic Whiteness, and recycling of dominant rhetoric about the presumed cultural deficits of urban youth, all of which strategically silence the students' daily lived reality of race. (p. 602)

As seen in the previous argument, studies reveal that “teachers of color who do not bestow a critical consciousness . . . ultimately integrate an uncritical pedagogy that perpetuates limited access and educational inequity for Raza students” (Berta-Ávila, 2004, p. 78). This connects with Liou and Rojas’s (2016) argument that teachers of all races lacking political consciousness “can contribute to societal discourses that often blame students for school failure and their perceived lack of social capital. These stereotypes can then lead to low expectations for students in the classroom” (p. 384). Ek et al. (2011) claim that “even when teachers are of the same ethnicity as their students, they may be unaware of their language or cultural ideologies” (p. 18). In her study, Godina-Martínez’s (2010) labeled as ‘well-meaning others’ those colleagues of color who failed to realize how the system they were a part of “was responsible for the systemic failure of Raza students and students of color. They failed to see that the maestr@s, in their ‘success’ in having ‘made-it’ as educators, were the exception and not the rule” (p. 104).

All of this reflects the need for educators of color who are also conscious and aware of how the system has failed students of color and their roles in either perpetuating systemic inequities or challenging them. As Berta-Ávila (2004) succinctly states “it is not enough to be just a teacher of color” (p. 78). At the same time, according to Godina-Martinez (2010), being conscious is not something that is achieved or that one could “‘arrive to’ and be conscious, it [means] a continual seeking out and working to understand how and why the systemic inequities that existed marginalized Raza students and students of color” (p. 106). Latinx students need “politically conscious [teachers] critically aware of how the centrality of Whiteness in the school context often creates a structure that is dismissive of the social capital that Latina/o students bring to school” (Liou & Rojas, 2016, p. 386). Furthermore, “the challenge for Chicano students is to help them help the U.S. arrive at a truly multi-racial, multi-ethnic democracy” (García & Wise, 2010, p. 167). In the following section, I will overview the motivations and experiences of Latinx educators.

### **Latinx Educators**

The underrepresentation of Latinx teachers is a “national phenomenon that stems from historical and institutional factors that continue to skew who has access to critical thinking courses, higher-level learning, college attendance, and careers in teaching” (Ochoa, 2007, p. 7). In regards to bilingual Latinx, their decision to work in bilingual education places them in a counter-hegemonic position; “that is, when asked to acquiesce or mediate, they may choose to maintain a sense of personal, social and political integrity that may result in a form of resistance and/or sabotage” (Arce, 2004, pp. 231-232). Moreover, “language is inextricably bound up with identity, and Latinos have sought to reinforce their common identity by asserting their language within an American culture that often rejected them” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, p. 122).

The fact that Latinx bilinguals choose to return to education, calls for a research approach that will gain an insight into their experiences and decision to become TWI educators. As our Latinx student population continues to grow nationwide (Crosnoe, 2006; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Garcia, 2001; Howard, Sugarman, & Christian, 2003; Valencia, 2010a; Valencia, 2010b; Valverde, 2006), this country cannot afford to neglect the dire need for the diversification of the teaching population. There is research that highlights the importance of increasing teacher diversity (Brooks, 2012; Ochoa, 2007; Spring, 2018; Téllez, 1999; Valencia, 2010a). According to Ochoa (2007), there is research that suggests that teachers of color have high expectations for students with whom they share the same racial/ethnic background. Furthermore, these educators of color “may be role models for all students who enhance educational experiences, raise student self-esteem, and decrease absenteeism and disciplinary referrals for students of color” (Ochoa, 2007, p. 7). Moreover, Valencia (2010a) provides a rationale for addressing the issue of underrepresentation of Latinx educators. Valencia (2010a) claims that,

First, there is the notion of 'shared identity' between teacher and learner . . . Second . . . the importance of role models . . . is a logical pedagogical extension of shared identity . . . one can justifiably assert that Chicano and other minority students would educationally profit more directly from a teacher role model when there is a racial/ethnic match between teacher and learner . . . A third fact of a rationale for having Chicano and other Latino teachers is multicultural education. Given the dramatic increase in the Latino school-age population, and the growth of an overall racial/ethnic minority in the K-12 sector, the need for a culturally pluralistic curriculum is critical for minority, as well as for White students. (pp. 33-35)



In the case of Latinx teachers, they can act as role models for Latinx students, deliver bilingual education, and help promote racial/ethnic understanding and respect among all students (Valencia, 2010a). But that is not enough, there is a need of critical and effective educators (Alfaro & Bartolome, 2017; Arce, 2004; Berta-Ávila, 2003, 2004; Elzarry & Riabile, 2011; Expósito & Favela, 2003; Godina-Martínez, 2010; Reyes McGovern, 2013; Urrieta, 2007), conscious (Adams, 2007; Darder, 1995; Ek et al., 2011; Freire, 1970; Gadotti, 1994; Hinchey, 2004; Walsh, 1995), ideologically clear (Alfaro & Bartolome, 2017; Bartolomé, and Balderrama, 2001; Expósito & Favela, 2003), and educators who are trained in sociolinguistic awareness and the role that sociolinguistic ideologies play in bilingual classrooms (Alfaro & Bartolome, 2017; Dubetz, 2014).

### **Latinx Educational Path**

Schools continue to fail our Latinx students, whose pushout rates are alarming (Fashola, Slavin, & Calderón, 2001; Gándara, 2009; Pérez, Huber, Malagón, Ramirez, Gonzalez, Jimenez, & Vélez, 2015; Rumberger & Rodríguez, 2010; Valdez, 1996; Walsh, 1995; Yosso & Solorzano, 2006). Yosso's (2005) Chicana/o Educational Pipeline, or path (Jiménez, Ruiz & Smith, 2020; Ocasio, 2014) provided a representation of how many Latinx students are pushed out by schools in comparison to the other major racial/ethnic groups in the United States and Covarrubias (2011) provides an intersectional analysis of the educational pipeline to understand "how practices and policies within educational institutions have impacted our eventual outcomes" (p. 91). Ten years after Yosso's study, Pérez et al. (2015), provided the following statistics: Out of 100 Latinas, 63 graduate from high school; out of 100 Latinos, 60 graduate from high school. In fact, in the state in which this study is conducted 66.3% of Latinx students graduated from high

school in 2017 (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). In Bybee's (2014) study, there is reference to a systemic "cycle of educational failure" that connects the poverty and the pushout rates of Latinx students to the lack of access to the teaching profession. Instead of utilizing a supply and demand approach to this issue, the recruitment of Latinx teachers should focus on empowering aspiring teachers of color to change society (Bybee, 2014).

**Latinx Teachers Experiences.** In her study, Dubetz (2014) profiled two experienced bilingual educators and utilized their stories to illustrate the paths that educators take to enact advocacy-oriented visions of bilingual education over their careers. Dubetz (2014) found that "personal experiences that inform teachers' advocacy efforts include previous K-12 educational experience, experiences they have had as members of immigrant families and as minorities, and their previous experiences as activists" (p. 12). This study's findings correlated with three other studies on the idea that personal experiences influenced teachers' identity formation. One of the studies is Bybee (2014), where a two-year critical ethnography investigated the racial identity productions of a cohort of Latinx teachers in a bilingual education program at a public university. The second study is Liou and Rojas (2016), where they conducted a study on one Chicano teacher's disposition and perception of high expectations for his Latinx students. This study in particular investigated the ways in which institutional memory and teacher's politicization informed the Chicano teacher's social justice commitment and effectiveness as an educator. The third study is Ramirez and de la Cruz (2016), where the journey into education by two Latinx educators is presented. This study utilizes narratives to reveal significant constructs that shaped their journeys which had significant implications for Latinx youth in the educational system. Moreover, the findings in Dubetz's (2014) study correlates with Bybee's (2014) findings that

Latinx teachers draw upon life experiences and knowledge as members of minority groups to approach their work as educators with a political commitment to social justice.

In her study of 12 black, Latina, and Asian American women enrolled in a teacher education program, Kohli (2012) highlights critical race dialogue about the educational experiences and observations of the participants. Through the use of cross-cultural discussions, the participants, according to Kohli (2012), were able to broaden their understanding of racial oppression and plan for solidarity building among diverse students in urban classrooms. Kohli (2012) found that the impact of enduring racism is long lasting, even after the incident is over. In fact, “racism can seep into the psyche, and affect the way a person sees him- or herself and the world around him or her, a phenomenon defined as internalized racism” (Kohli, 2012, p. 68). Bybee (2014) claims that the experiences of Latinx teachers, referenced above, build the foundation for resisting dominant views that portrays them and their students as linguistically and culturally deficient.

**Latinx Teachers Motivations.** Berta-Ávila (2004) grounded her study of three self-identified Xicana/Xicano participants in a Xicana/Xicano framework and critical pedagogy. She found that there is a strong sense of responsibility among Xicano/a teachers for the social and academic success of their Latinx students. In fact, “this sense of personal responsibility led the teachers to demonstrate higher academic expectations of their students—actively instead of passively believing in their success” (Liou & Rojas, 2016, p. 384). In addition to believing in Latinx student success, Latinx teachers accept that their motivation lies in their commitment to “counter the system,” as it was discovered by Godina-Martínez (2010). In her study, she explored the reasons why venues of sustainability are needed among critical Xicana/o educators,

with emphasis on eight members of a group support network of high school and university Raza educators in Northern California. Godina-Martínez (2010) found that teachers recognized that “the historic systemic failure of Raza students was proof of [the system’s failure], which is why they were different from others who entered the profession for the ‘love of their subject matter’” (p. 91). Furthermore, ethnic identity and the desire to be a role model plays an important role in the motivation behind Mexican American bilingual teachers (Bybee, 2014). In his study of twenty-four Mexican Americans development of Chicana/o Activist Educator identities, Urrieta (2007) utilized an ethnographic interview as well as a life history interview to focus on the participants’ conceptual and procedural identity production in local Chicana/o activist figured worlds. Urrieta (2007) argues that the desire to return to their home communities and give back is what brought many of the participants into education.

**Latinx Teachers Beliefs and Expectations.** Every belief and attitude is political (Expósito & Favela, 2003). In the case of teachers of bilingual students, these beliefs and attitudes “are grounded in life experiences that deem immigrant students’ language and culture as assets or deficits, depending on the teachers’ worldview” (Expósito & Favela, 2003, p. 74). In interviewing critical Xicana/Xicano educators, Berta-Ávila (2004) found that Xicana/Xicano educators need to be critical and conscious of oppressive structures in education, besides sharing a linguistic and cultural background, if they are to be effective educators of students of color. For example, “this [means] shattering existing perceptions and re-teaching by undoing the damage that had already convinced many of the Raza students that they were incapable of making their education their own and making it mean something to them” (Godina-Martinez, 2010, p. 100). Furthermore, in their study Bartolomé and Balderrama (2001) found that their participants shared “their rejection of deficit views of Mexicano/Latino students and their refusal to assume

assimilationist views in educating these students” (p. 57). This is crucial because of the impact that teachers’ beliefs have on student school performance (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

Latinx students “enter our public schools with high aspirations and the desire to pursue the ‘American dream.’ When they affirm their own definition of educational success and their own views of the ‘American dream,’ their voices are often dismissed and ignored” (Espinoza-Herold, 2003, p. 15). Teachers’ attitudes and beliefs “affect the access to academic achievement of the very same students they are trying to serve” (Espinoza-Herold, 2003, p. 15). Liou and Rojas (2016) claim that

By viewing students from the vantage of wealth, teachers should communicate their expectations by defining intellectual rigor with a strong focus on the acquisition of knowledge, social capital, and analytical and navigational skills. As the second expectancy effects, teaching and learning for politically marginalized students must enforce the centrality of their lived experiences in a manner that also decenters White norms and conceptions of achievement in the forms of high stakes standardized exams and other exclusionary practices that reinforce supremacist ideologies. (p. 387)

Furthermore, they argue that enacting transformative expectations requires that teachers use empowering curriculum in culturally relevant ways, which must include the use of diverse and positive representations of their communities in the curriculum, opportunities to learn about themselves and other racial groups, and being intentional in developing and implementing academic programs that would help further the students’ advancement in the educational pipeline (Liou & Rojas, 2016).

In her study that centered on the lived experiences of Chicana K-12 teachers from Southern California, Reyes McGovern (2013) documents how Chicana teachers explain the

connection between their life experiences and their classroom practices. My research expands on the notion of Latinx teacher lived experiences in connection with their journeys to TWI education. Furthermore, my study recognizes the impact that lived experiences have on the development of beliefs about education and it is utilizing an approach to the methodology that allows for educators to share their experiences. This methodology will be further explained in Chapter 3.

Currently, there is limited research that investigates the journeys of Latinx bilingual educators to TWI programs and the connections between their lived experiences with the development of their beliefs about education. There are studies on the life and institutional experiences of Latinx educators (Bybee, 2014; Ek, Sánchez, & Quijada Cerecer, 2013; Flores, Clark, Guerra, & Sánchez, 2008; Guyton, Saxton, & Wesche, 1996; Liou & Rojas, 2016; Ochoa, 2007; Reyes McGovern, 2013; Téllez, 1999); on the decision of teachers of color to teach in urban schools (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Godina-Martínez, 2010; Irizarry & Raible, 2011); on their beliefs about education (Berta-Ávila, 2003; Ek, Sánchez, & Quijada Cerecer, 2013; Liou & Rojas, 2016); and on the development of critical educators (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001; Berta-Ávila, 2003; Godina-Martínez, 2010; Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Liou & Rojas, 2016; Reyes McGovern, 2013; Urrieta, 2007), but there is a gap in the research on the path of Latinx bilingual educators to TWI programs and how their lived experiences influence the development of their beliefs about education.

Looking at the stratification of Spanish, the racist ideologies in public settings, and the negative realities of Latinx students in public schools (Liou & Rojas, 2016; Yosso, 2005), this study engages in the conversation about the need to listen to the experiences of Latinx bilingual

teachers to understand what is needed to recruit and retain more Latinx bilingual educators “to serve as role models, to develop bilingual education, and to promote racial/ethnic understanding and respect among all students” (Valencia, 2010a, p. 37). This call to action from Valencia (2010a) to rectify the problem of underrepresentation of teachers of color speaks to the significance of this study.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I reviewed the following three overarching themes: historical background of the Latinx experience in the United States, the development of bilingual education and TWI programs, and the topic of lack of diversity in the teaching profession and the need for teachers of color who are critical, conscious, ideologically clear, and committed to implementing culturally relevant curriculum. In this regard, “history has taught Latinas/os to use their education to empower their own community, and to generate social movements to transform society” (Liou & Rojas, 2016, p. 381). Furthermore, according to Bristol and Martin-Fernandez (2019), students of color learn more when taught by same-race teachers. These educators of color need to be reflective of their beliefs and worldviews they bring to their teaching if they are truly going to be effective educators. To further explore the topics of motivation to work in TWI programs and the development of beliefs about education, this research will interview bilingual Latinx educators in Minnesota.

### **Preview of Chapter Three**

In the next chapter, I will explore the protocol for conducting the research in this qualitative study. This research will use a multiple case study to explore and understand the decisions of Latinx bilingual educators to teach in TWI programs as well as the development of

their beliefs about education. I will be conducting surveys to identify focal participants to interview. The protocol of the research will be further explored in the next chapter.



### CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

My ‘stories’ are acts encapsulated in time, ‘enacted’ every time they are spoken aloud or read silently. I like to think of them as performances and not as inert and ‘dead’ objects (as aesthetics of Western culture think of art works). Instead, the work has an identity; it is a ‘who’ or a ‘what’ and contains the presences of persons, that is, incarnations of gods or ancestors or natural and cosmic power.

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Using a critical pedagogy lens allows this research to connect with the idea that the historicity of knowledge “requires that schools be understood within the boundaries of not only their social practice but also their historical realities” (Darder, 1995, p. 44). Besides critical pedagogy, the use of critical race theory (CRT) centers this historical context on race and the impact that a racialized society has on academic inequity (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 2017). In addition, the LatCrit framework (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001) used in this study adds dimensions to the Latinx experience, which moves away from the black/white binary when discussing topics of race and racism in this country. Also, the LatCrit framework allows this study to acknowledge and make connections between race, language, and identity within the Latinx experience in the United States (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

Research on the lack of representation of Latinxs in the teaching profession benefits from a historical contextualization, as illustrated in Chapter 2. At the same time, the understanding of this phenomenon requires the use of a study to provide extensive and in-depth descriptions in a contemporary context (Yin, 2018). The research that informs this dissertation draws from a

multiple case study that investigates the journeys of Latinx bilingual-educators in Minnesota to two-way immersion (TWI) education. Through surveys, dialogues, and journal entries, I document how Latinx teachers explain the connections between their experiences (lived and institutional)<sup>8</sup> and their decision to work in TWI programs, as well as the development of their beliefs about education.

### **Research Design**

This research is designed as a qualitative multiple case study. Crewell & Poth (2017) define case study as a qualitative approach, using in-depth data collection that involves multiple sources of information (Carspecken, 1996), in which the researcher explores real-life cases. Yin (2018) suggests the use of case study when:

- (1) “Your main research questions are ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions,
- (2) You have little or no control over behavioral events, and
- (3) Your focus of study is a contemporary [as opposed to entirely historical] phenomenon” (p. 2).

### **Case Study Questions**

The use of a multiple case study (Yin, 2018) allows this research to explore and understand the decisions of Latinx bilinguals to teach in TWI programs and the development of their beliefs about education. The research questions I address are:

- (1) How are Latinx dual language teachers’ lived experiences connected with their decisions to work in two-way immersion programs?

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<sup>8</sup> Liou and Rojas (2016) used lived experiences and institutional experiences to develop their theory of transformative expectations for Latina/o students. Also, Reyes McGovern’s (2013) study centers the lived experiences of Chicana in the way these educators teach. For this study, I am using lived experiences (family and live events) as well as institutional experiences (primarily in public school settings) to connect them with the decision to work in TWI programs as well as the developments of beliefs about education from Latinx bilingual educators.

(2) How are Latinx dual language teachers' lived experiences connected with their beliefs about education?

In order to present a depth in understanding of the cases, this study combines elements of multiple qualitative data collection methods: surveys, dialogues, and journal entries.

### **Case Selection**

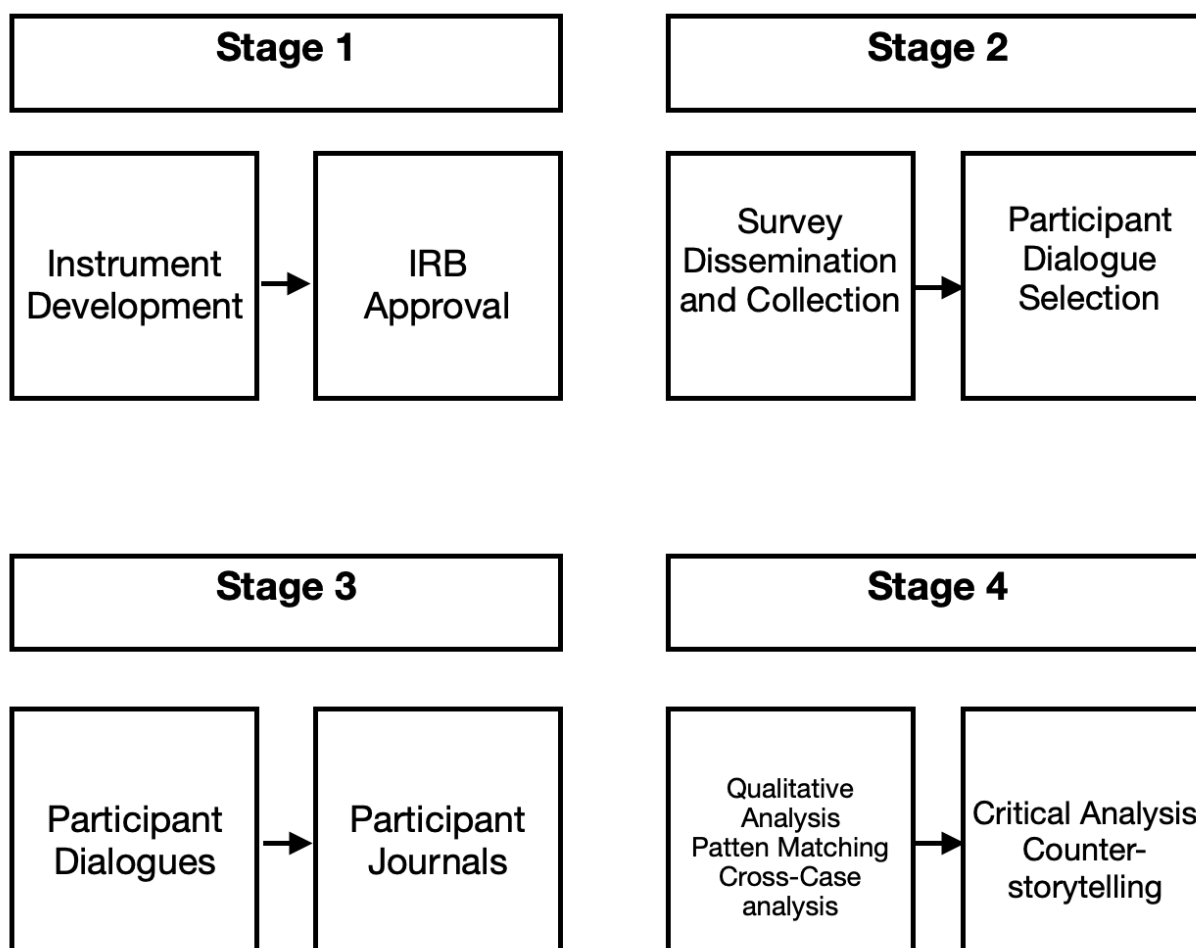
This dissertation examines four cases bounded by their experience as Latinx students in K-12 settings and as teachers in TWI programs in Minnesota. In addition, the criteria for selecting the four cases are:

- (1) they are current or former educators in Spanish two-way immersion programs in Minnesota;
- (2) they identify as Latinx; and
- (3) because this study is also looking at the institutional experiences and their influence on these educators, another criteria is for educators to have had fully or partially experienced K-12 U.S. education as students.

In order to address the research questions and present the findings of this study, Chapter 4 presents a description of each of the four cases for this study: Alma, Armando, Noemi, and Jacky. The historical context of these cases has been described in depth in Chapter 2. However, a description of each of the four cases is presented in this chapter to contextualize the decision of the participants to become TWI educators and to share their reflections on the development of their beliefs about education.

### **Study Overview**

This study's research process, as illustrated in Figure 9, is influenced by the work from Levings's (2014) multiple case study research design.

**Figure 9***Multiple Case Study Research Plan*

The design was divided into four stages. The first stage consisted of developing and piloting the following instruments: a survey, a participant interview protocol, and the journal protocol. In addition, Institutional Review Board (IRB) consent was secured. The second stage involved the survey distribution and collection of data and the selection of dialogue participants. The third stage included conducting the dialogues with the participants and completing the journal entries by the participants. The fourth stage consisted of analyzing the qualitative data (dialogues and journals) using a critical qualitative approach.

**Stage 1**

**Instrument Development.** In the first stage of this study, I developed the data gathering instruments. I included surveys, dialogues, and focal participant journals to address the research questions, as well as my own reflective journals throughout the process. The data collection protocols are explained in the following paragraphs.

**Survey Instrument.** The instrument for conducting this survey was adapted, with permission, from a questionnaire by Pérez Belda (2020). The goal of this survey was to gather demographic data and interest from potential participants to be interviewed. The survey consisted of twelve closed-questions that are multiple choice (see Appendix A).

After the instrument was developed, I received feedback on the questions in the survey and their order. Once changes were made, a pilot survey was administered with two different individuals who were not part of the study. The final version of this instrument was completed prior to the IRB application and was ready to be distributed once IRB was approved.

**Dialogue Protocols.** According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2015), “an interview is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose. It goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views and everyday conversations, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach” (p. 3). Carspecken (1996) claims that dialogical data is generated through dialogues between researcher and researched. Furthermore, the use of dialogues democratizes the research process by giving participants a voice in the research and a chance to challenge the material produced by the researcher. The main focus of this research is the lived and institutional experiences of Latinx bilingual educators in TWI programs. The use of dialogues was the method chosen so the selected group of focal participants could share their stories.

There were 22 questions prepared that were used in all the dialogues (see Appendix B). The questions were divided in five themes: self-identity, schooling, family, teaching, and

political consciousness. These categories and some of the questions were adapted from the work by Reyes McGovern (2013), where she investigated the lived experiences of Chicana K-12 teachers from Southern California and the connections between those experiences and the teachers' classroom practices. In my case, I followed the same categories, but changed the questions to address the research questions in my study. I conducted a pilot dialogue with two participants not part of the study. The purpose of conducting the pilot dialogue was to test out the set of questions developed for this research for length of the dialogue and to identify modifications needed.

**Journal Protocol.** According to Simmons-Mackie and Damico (2001) “data collected from journaling can be used to successfully examine specific experiences in natural contexts and frameworks (as cited in Hayman, Wilkes, and Jackson, 2012, p. 27). Janesick (2016) claims that journal writing is a qualitative research technique that can be used in long-term qualitative studies. Although not long-term, my study benefited from using journaling as a data collection method because it enriched and complemented the data collected from the dialogues. Furthermore, journal entries (see Appendix C) allowed participants additional processing time to craft a thoughtful response as they reflect on their experiences and their beliefs about education. Additionally, journaling was a way to practice interdisciplinary triangulation, which was crucial as I conducted this case study by using multiple data sources.

**Institutional Review Board Approval.** I presented an application for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval on October 23, 2020. Approval was received on November 22, 2020 and I was given the IRB approval number 2020-11-126ET. I contacted the different organizations and TWI programs in Minnesota to share the recruitment email. The initial emails were sent out on November 23, 2020 and I began to set up dialogues with the focal participants

as I started receiving the completed surveys. All of the interviews and journal entries were completed in the 2020-2021 academic year.

## **Stage 2**

**Survey Dissemination and Collection.** Following IRB approval from Hamline University, I contacted these organizations by email (see Appendix D): Minnesota Advocates for Immersion Network (MAIN), Minnesota Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (MinneTESOL) and Minnesota Council for the Teaching of Languages and Cultures (MCTLC) in order to request support in distributing the survey to potential participants. In addition to contacting these organizations, I used a list of Spanish TWI schools shared by the Minnesota Department of Education to contact teachers in these programs.

I used Google Forms to design, distribute, and gather data from the survey. The survey was distributed via email so the data could be entered automatically into a database upon completion from the participants. The research used a simple random sample for the survey with the groups of two-way immersion educators being asked to participate. Personal information was only requested once participants agreed in being interviewed for this study.

**Participant Dialogue Selection.** I used surveys to identify candidates to interview that met the following criteria:

- (1) they are current or former educators in Spanish two-way immersion programs in Minnesota;
- (2) they identify as Latinx; and
- (3) because this study is also looking at the institutional experiences and their influence on these educators, another criteria is for educators to have had fully or partially experienced K-12 U.S. education as students.

The survey was conducted prior to the dialogues, which helped me identify potential participants who fell under each of the categories in the criteria and that also showed interest in being interviewed. As soon as potential focal participants were identified, their names were added to a table that included their real name, and their assigned code; under which the transcripts and journal files were saved, as well as a pseudonym that was used for the narrative and for presenting the results.

### **Stage 3**

**Participant Dialogues.** The dialogues were conducted with four focal participants. I contacted each focal participant via email (see Appendix E). The email included my name, institution, and purpose of the study. As soon as focal participants responded, I started scheduling dialogues and sent the informed consent form (see Appendix F). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the dialogues were conducted online via zoom. The focal participants were able to choose the date and time by signing up to a timeslot. During the dialogue, the questions were shared on the computer screen for guidance.

The approach used for these dialogues was a set of audio- and video-recorded, open-ended, in-depth, semi-structured questions over Zoom, where focal participants were able to sign up for a time that was more convenient for them. One round of dialogues was conducted with each focal participant. The focus of the dialogues were the experiences of the teachers and the impact on their decision to become educators in TWI programs and the development of their beliefs about education. I used a sequence of carefully ordered questions by theme. This was done with two goals in mind: to stay on task throughout the dialogue and to allow for some adaptability in getting the information needed from the participants. The dialogues were conducted in December, 2020.



During the dialogues, I used introductory paragraphs to let focal participants know the focus of each section. I used zoom to audio and video record the dialogues. Following each of the dialogues, which lasted between 60 to 90 minutes, I created the transcripts for each dialogue. I gave focal participants the option of reading the transcripts. The final record contained accurate verbatim data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). To ensure the privacy of the participants, each dialogue transcript was assigned a code. The video and audio files were saved in my personal computer which is password protected.

**Participant Journals.** At the end of the dialogue, I presented the next steps to the participants, which included responding to journal entries. They were provided with five questions and only had to choose four. The focal participants were asked to complete the prompts in any order they wanted within a month of receiving them, averaging one per week. I asked focal participants to write as much as they wanted and to share as much as they felt comfortable. I sent weekly reminders to the participants to complete their journals. Once they were finished, the participants emailed me and I downloaded the document in a word file.

#### **Stage 4**

**Qualitative Analysis.** The analysis of dialogue transcripts and focal participants' journal entries gave me an opportunity to understand and explain the experiences of Latinx bilingual educators in connection to deciding to work in TWI programs and the development of their beliefs about education in Chapter 4. Understanding that the statements from the participants of this study were not "collected" but part of a "co-authored" effort by the researcher helped guide the analysis of this study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

After I transcribed the dialogues, I listened to the audio an additional two times for each of the cases. I utilized the qualitative analysis software Atlas-TI to conduct the analysis of the

data. Each of the four dialogues and four journals were saved in different documents and uploaded to Atlas-TI with the code assigned to each participant.

As suggested by Agar (1980), I read the transcripts multiple times without marking anything but looking at what was said throughout the dialogues and immerse myself in the details (Creswell & Poth, 2017). After a couple of readings, I started writing notes about first impressions on my notebook. This was followed by coding “done with an eye for both descriptive and thematic data” (Creswell, 1995, as cited in Thompson, p. 35).

In addition to Stake (1995), this study used Creswell & Poth (2017) and Yin’s (2018) models for data analysis, “by which the data is analyzed by both direct interpretation and aggregation of instances in the form of codes” (Thompson, 2010, p. 35). The first round of coding was based on predetermined and emergent codes. Following the first round of coding, I re-read the transcripts to identify categories that would fit with the different codes identified on the first round. After re-reading the transcripts multiple times, I combined the codes into different categories and looked for patterns from the data case by case. I initially developed 50 codes. Following the re-read of the transcripts, these codes were combined into 10 categories by pairing codes and eliminating irrelevant codes. For example, “microaggressions” and “being measured by whiteness” became child codes under the parent code “Negative Experiences in Education.” While there is another category labeled “Schooling Experience,” the negative experiences were put as a separate category in order to acknowledge the complete range of experiences of Latinx as students in Minnesota; as they impact the educational attainment of this minoritized community, explored in Chapter 2. The same process was used to code the journals. After the dialogue transcripts had been coded and read multiple times, I moved on to the journals and applied codes that had been identified during the coding of the transcripts as well as

emergent codes.

The 10 categories for the data collected (dialogues and journals) are:

1. Beliefs about education
2. Decision to teach
3. Family experiences
4. Negative experiences in education
5. Political consciousness
6. Schooling experience
7. Self-identity
8. Teacher preparation programs
9. Teaching in a non-immersion program
10. Two-way immersion programs

***Pattern Matching.*** One of the most desirable techniques for case study analysis is the use of a pattern-matching logic (Yin, 2018). By using pattern matching for outcomes and for rival explanations, I made comparisons of the predetermined and emergent themes to the empirical patterns that appeared in the research. Sinkovics (2018) argues that “theories generally propose predictions, pattern matching involves an attempt to link a predicted pattern that is derived from theory, with an observed pattern” (p. 470). I approached this research with the proposition that these five areas impact the decisions of Latinx to become teachers in TWI programs and also the development of their beliefs about education come from their experiences in these categories: self-identity, schooling, family, teaching, and political consciousness. During the data analysis, I looked for connections between the predetermined themes identified prior to the research and the outcomes of the data collected.

***Cross-Case Analysis.*** The data coming from the journals and the dialogues with the participants allowed me to identify the patterns within each case before connections could be made across cases to check “further for literal and theoretical replications” (Yin, 2018, p. 197). When looking at “why” teachers decided to work in TWI programs and “how” their beliefs about education developed over time, conducting a cross-case analysis provided a holistic approach to answer the research questions using the data gathered across cases.

Cross-case descriptions were based on relevant themes from each case and comparison to the other cases using the patterns obtained from the data. In my analysis of the data, I summarized, integrated, combined, and compared themes from each case study.

No two cases are the same and there exists the possibility of “potentially contaminating differences among the individual cases” (Yin, 2018, p. 198) in my multiple-case study. The individual cases share commonalities that include the ethnic identity of the participants and their experiences as people of color in this society that makes them sufficiently comparable to warrant common findings between them. Throughout the analysis, I am conscious to identify any dissimilarities exhibited by the cases, and I address the dissimilarities that “appear to undermine the findings from [my] synthesis” (Yin, 2018, p. 199).

The cross-case analysis involved determined the presence of the predetermined themes identified prior to starting the data collection: self-identity, schooling, family, teaching, and political consciousness. During the cross-case analysis the study looked at comparing the four cases utilizing the themes identified previously when answering the research questions in order to look for similarities and differences across cases (Stake, 1995).

**Critical Analysis.** This study relies on critical race theory (CRT) to center the historical context on race and the impact that a racialized society has on academic inequity (Ladson-

Billings & Tate IV, 2017). Also, under the umbrella of CRT, LatCrit is one component that adds dimensions to the Latinx experience, by moving away from the black/white binary when discussing topics of race and racism in this country. In this study, the LatCrit framework informs the focus on investigating the self-identity formation of each of the participants, which takes into consideration experiences of migration, immigration status, language, and ethnic identities.

The LatCrit framework acknowledges and explicitly makes connections between race, language, and identity within the Latinx experience in the United States (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001); at the same time that it connects with those experiences and the influence on the participants' decision to work in TWI programs and the development of their beliefs about education. Taking these lenses into account, in the description of each case, the lived and institutional experiences of these four Latinx bilingual educators in TWI programs in the state of Minnesota are provided to bring forward issues that Latinx students face within the educational system in the United States.

***Counter-Storytelling.*** In educational research, “social scientists offer at least two types of stories to explain unequal educational outcomes -majoritarian stories and counterstories” (Yosso, 2006, p. 4). A counterstory “begins with an understanding that inadequate educational conditions limit equal access and opportunities in Chicana/o schooling” (Yosso, 2006, p. 4). Just as Yosso (2006) this study “joins the continuous struggle to ensure counterstories challenge and transform institutionalized racism” (p. 14). In her study, Yosso (2006) identified the following functions that counterstories served in the fight against educational inequality:

1. Counterstories can build community among those at the margins of society;
2. Counterstories can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center;
3. Counterstories can nurture community cultural wealth, memory, and resistance;

#### 4. Counterstories can facilitate transformation in education. (pp. 14-15)

Delgado (2011) argues that stories about oppression promote group solidarity by allowing listeners to not feel alone. Furthermore, according to Delgado (2011) “Listening to stories makes the adjustment to further stories easier; one acquires the ability to see the world through others' eyes. It can lead the way to new environments” (Delgado, 2011, p. 239). The use of counter-storytelling in educational research rejects the notion that there is a linear uplift and improvement of racial progress in the United States (Corbado, 2011). By using counternarratives, there is an acknowledgment of the inadequate conditions that limit equal access and opportunities in Latinx schooling which counters the dominant discourse (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2017). Also, “counterstories reflect on the lived experiences of People of Color to raise critical consciousness about social and racial injustice” (Yosso, 2005, p. 10).

In her study, Ochoa (2007) argued that when we listen to the stories of Latinx teachers, “we understand multiple patterns that past and present students encounter, learn how these teachers were able to achieve their educational aspirations, observe how they are drawing on their schooling experiences to teach today's children” (p. 110), with the hope that their lessons can impact future generations. The counterstories in Chapter 4 correspond to the experiences (lived and institutional) of Latinx bilingual educators in Minnesota and the impact those experiences had on their self-identity formation. It is through these experiences, and an understanding of their self-identity formation, that an understanding of the participants' decision to work in TWI programs and the development of their beliefs about education can be addressed.

This approach in Chapter 4 acknowledges the need to move away from telling a majoritarian story when trying to understand the journeys of Latinx bilingual teachers. The patterns identified in the data collected were used to tell the story of each case by using narrative

description (Stake, 1995). The four case narratives provide an overview of the lived and institutional experiences of the participants that influenced their self-identity formation. These narratives are crucial in understanding the journeys of Latinx bilingual educators to TWI programs and the development of their beliefs about education. Each case description starts with an epigraph that encapsulates the voices of each participant in relation to their points of view on identity, language or the decision to become a teacher. Also, throughout the description of each case, direct quotations are used to bring the voices of each of the participants. Following the descriptions of each case, the findings section addresses the research questions.

### **Philosophical Ideas**

I approached the design and data collection of this study cognizant of the fact that “[my] own act of doing research and writing it up will carry references to [myself] - [my] intentions, qualities, capacities, and identity” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 167). In fact, my “ideology [as a researcher], including [my] values . . . enter intrinsically and inseparable into the methods, interpretations, and epistemology of [this] critical [qualitative] research” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 5). Just as Carspecken (1996), my value orientation to the reasons why I conduct this research and my choice of subjects and sites did not determine the facts found in the field for “values and facts are interlinked but not fused” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 6). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010) “Qualitative researchers thus do not deny human subjectivity, but rather take it into account through various strategies” (p. 332).

My goal in choosing the previously discussed analytic strategies is to attend to all the evidence collected. According to Yin (2018) “your analysis should show how it sought to use as much evidence as was available, and your interpretations should account for all this evidence and

leave no loose ends” (p. 199). My interpretations derive from my constructivist worldview and cultural intuition, which will be discussed below.

Creswell & Creswell (2018) stated it is important to make explicit the larger philosophical ideas that a researcher espouses. In my case, my decision to utilize a multiple case study is based on my constructivist worldview. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), researchers who espouse a constructivist worldview “recognize that their own backgrounds shape their interpretations, and they position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretations flow from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences” (p. 8). This connects with Yosso’s (2005) argument that “data cannot ‘speak’ without interpretation . . . [and] . . . I try to bring theoretical sensitivity to this research process while I draw upon my cultural intuition to interpret and analyze findings” (p. 11). Cultural intuition is defined by Rocha, Alonso, López Mares-Tamay, and Reyes McGovern (2016) as “a theoretical sensitivity that extends personal memory into the collective and community experience and empowers participants throughout the research process that includes engaging them in the data analysis” (p. 744). The cultural intuition I bring to this work as an immigrant, first generation college student, former ELL student and TWI educator, informs my approach to this study. Also, by utilizing a constructivist worldview to this research, my intent is to investigate the complexity of views and experiences of Latinx bilingual teachers in TWI programs.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I reviewed the methodology to conduct this research and to answer the research questions that focus in understanding the journeys of Latinx bilingual teachers to two-way immersion and the development of their beliefs about education. With the use of multiple case study, I utilize an in-depth data collection approach that relates to real-life cases that will



allow me to provide extensive and in-depth descriptions in a contemporary context. The data was collected using surveys, and focal participant dialogues and journaling.

Though TWI programs have educators from different racial, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, this study focused on the experiences of Latinx bilingual educators. The core of this study relies on the authentic experiences of Latinx bilingual teachers as they reflect on being students and teachers of color in the United States. By focusing on this underrepresented group of K-12 educators, this dissertation provides an insider's perspective on the challenges still faced by many Latinx students in schools. As our Latinx student population continues to grow nationwide, the United States cannot afford to neglect the needs of these students, who are the future of this country, as well as the dire need for the diversification of our teaching staff (Valencia, 2010b). It starts with acknowledging the impact that a racialized society has on the academic outcomes of students of color in this country and to look for ways to disrupt those systems of oppression.

#### **Preview of Chapter Four**

Solórzano (1997, 1998) identified tenets of critical race theory that inform this research. In particular, by using dialogues and journaling as data collection methods, this study centers the experiential knowledge of Latinx bilingual educators. In Chapter 4, a narrative will be presented for each of the four cases in this study. These narratives will contextualize the findings that address the research questions.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

When I theorize, I tell a story, and by this I try to understand, try to make sense of, my universe. This is my theorizing, my storytelling. This is the place and the movement when I was born, and where I grew. It is also my place and my movement in relation to my family, my community, and my society.

Martínez, 1996, p. 117

In this multiple case study, four Latinx bilingual educators used journals and dialogues to reflect about their lived and institutional experiences. Their journal entries and the dialogues I had with them granted me an insider perspective as they reflected on their experiences. The dialogues and journals in which the Latinx bilingual teachers participated target the two research questions that constitute the core of this dissertation:

- (1) How are Latinx dual language teachers' lived experiences connected with their decisions to work in two-way immersion programs?
- (2) How are Latinx dual language teachers' lived experiences connected with their beliefs about education?

Besides my personal commitment to honoring the stories of the participants in this study, as it was explained in Chapter 3 under counter-storytelling, this dissertation presents the narratives – drafted from the conversations and insights shared by the participants in their journals– as a way to contextualize the findings that address the research questions. It is my goal that these counterstories (Yosso, 2006), can bring Latinx bilingual listeners together (Delgado, 2011), and that the lessons shared by the participants can also improve the schooling experiences of future Latinxs in this country (Ochoa, 2007).

I begin this chapter with a narrative of each of the cases describing the experiences of the participants: Alma, Armando, Noemi, and Jacky<sup>9</sup>. Each case narrative starts with an epigraph that encapsulates the voices of each participant in relation to their reflection on identity, language, or the decision to become teachers. Also, throughout the description of each narrative, direct quotations are used to tell the story of each of the participants using their own voices. Following the descriptions of each of the four cases, I will share the major findings as a way to answer the two research questions that guide this study.

### **Case Studies Narratives**

#### **Case 1: Alma**

For me, . . . my identity and my language and my purpose as a teacher are just so tied together because of the struggles that I've experienced and because of what I want to avoid other people experiencing . . . I want to be an ally and push people forward and . . . change the American view of being monolingual as the ultimate thing, you know, or it's just the status quo and so that no other little kid ends up thinking that Spanish is not good enough.

-Alma, TWI educator, Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20

Alma has been an educator for six years in a two-way immersion (TWI) program in Minnesota. She immigrated to this country at the age of eleven. Even though she was born in El Salvador, Alma recognizes that her identity has evolved into something else as she “couldn’t just be Salvadorian anymore because . . . that wasn’t really what I was after a while” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). For Alma, her Latinx identity comes with the commonality of cultural and linguistic experiences shared within the Latinx community in the United States. She feels that language and the Latinx identity go hand-in-hand as you take “some of your language with you

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<sup>9</sup> These are pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants. Pseudonyms are also used for any person that had interaction with the participants and are part of this study.

when you're identifying yourself" (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). According to Alma, Hispanic "was not something that I was comfortable labeling myself. I think it just has this connotation of something that was put on you by the U.S." (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). On the other hand, Latinx "encompass this idea of *gente* that Hispanic just doesn't, you know, like *raza*, like we're all the same shared experience together to some degree" (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). Alma understands that this realization is influenced by taking courses during college on Chicano studies where she learned about the Chicano movement, language suppression, and cultural struggles Mexican-Americans experience in the United States.

After Alma's family arrived in this country, her mother "could really tell that English was quickly becoming this new tool . . . that was opening doors . . . but it was coming at a cost" (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). Alma was starting to forget words in Spanish. Alma's mother started to teach her the importance of not losing her Spanish by sharing messages like "*tienes que hablar español, que no se te olvide*<sup>10</sup>" (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). Because of her mother's influence, for Alma, Spanish continued to be the connection to her roots and her background. Alma's mother constantly reminded her that both English and Spanish were equally important. The positive messages that she heard during college resonated with the messages shared by her mother, which led Alma to the realization that her mother was right all along in the equal value placed on both languages. This was a message not heard by Alma throughout her K-12 education, which undermined her identity as a bilingual Latina student.

As Alma reflected on her school experience in the United States, she talked about the impact that having a teacher who spoke Spanish -when she first arrived in this country- had on her ability to feel connected, after having uprooted everything and arriving to a completely new

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<sup>10</sup> You must speak Spanish, do not forget it.

environment, country, and educational system. Her teacher was White, but “it was just this connection that even though we don’t come from the same background, we can share our language together” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). This commonality in language also allowed Alma’s mom to connect with Alma’s teacher and learn about what school was like in the United States, which was invaluable to them.

Alma voiced that there were messages she received throughout her education that undermined her identity as Latinx and bilingual. For example, when discussing her school experience, Alma mentioned that she felt the need to be better than most people because she “already came from a place of disadvantage” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20) in teachers’ eyes because of her lack of English skills. Alma felt that teachers approached her situation from a deficit model, which she internalized and felt that she had to push herself extra hard compared to her peers in order to be taken seriously. According to Alma “I had to really prove myself and not just prove myself by like, you know being okay, but like I had to be extraordinary and I had to beat everybody else in order for me to even have a leg up or have a chance” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20).

As a student, Alma received microaggressions from teachers that, according to her, “I know it comes from a point of ignorance and not necessarily a point of malice” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20) but that nevertheless negatively impacted her as a student. Throughout her education, teachers or adults at school assumed that she was Mexican because she was bilingual and Latina, which undermined her Salvadorian identity. The effect that this had on Alma was that she started to distance herself completely from her Mexican friends and even her Latinx friends because otherwise she would be considered Mexican, which she acknowledges “how toxic that was” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). This reflects the complexity within Latinx

identities as they negotiate microaggressions that undermine their ethnic identity, and also shows that Latinx is not a monolith but rather a label that encompasses multiple ways of being and multiple experiences. At the same time, Alma thinks that there was something within her own Latinx experience that favored Whiteness, which was associated with success and being on-track. Again, she also claims that “college just reversed a lot of that but not having access to like ethnic studies classes would have definitely been detrimental for me” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20).

Another example of microaggressions within education that negatively impacted Alma’s identity was that her “name has been butchered in every possible way you could ever think of” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). For Alma, this particular issue has been “a constant battle to self ratify who I am to every point, every part of every system in my life. And so it gets exhausting” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). Alma further explained that names have “so much meaning and to even attempt to get it right is so cherished by that person.” As someone who has to go through this every day “either makes you stronger or breaks you” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). Alma remembers moments in high school where, after years of having her name butchered,

. . . the substitute would just pause and just look at it. Then, I would raise my hand and I'd be like, it's me and then they'd be like, oh, okay, you know, and it just, it wears you down and I think because names are just so personal. (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20)

Alma connected this experience with why she loves Spanish because in Spanish is “¿cómo te llamas? like what do you call yourself? You know instead of in English. It's like what's your name? It's like what do you call yourself?” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20).

Alma’s name, as she said, has been butchered all throughout her education. And it did not stop once she got a job as a teacher. In fact, her name has been misspelled in her emergency

folder, on her banner outside of her room where students see it everyday, on her signup sheet, etc. Alma knows that now as an adult she has more agency to advocate for herself, but thinking of students who are going through the same experience now in classrooms around this country, they do not necessarily have the same agency and “on top of all that the challenge to authority is something you are taught not to do” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). For her, standing up for her name connects to the idea of standing up for your language, and “standing up for such a momentous and enormous idea of self that [current students] might not even know how to deal with because it’s so big” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20).

In addition to the deficit view that teachers had on Alma as an EL student, she internalized the message that she had to work twice as hard to measure up to her White peers. Alma explained that this idea of “being measured by Whiteness” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20) came from her experience as a Latinx student and “you just kind of measure yourself up to the adults or the people around you and obviously like every position of power is White” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). Her experiences and her background as an immigrant, bilingual, and Latinx were not representative of what was considered successful in school or in the media. None of the messages related to success considered her experience as an immigrant, Latinx, and bilingual as something she should aspire to maintain. Alma spoke about “this tug of war within myself of like here’s what the allure of Whiteness brings, but also here’s your family and your roots, and your ancestors, and your traditions, and your things” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). She recognized that her strong connection with her family, her culture, and her language, made it easier for her to maintain those identities and not give in to Whiteness. She accepted that “if I didn’t have those strong ties and strong family life, it would have definitely been more leaning towards this idea of like forgetting and just being this thing that will lead you to success, you know, or that I believed

at the time” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). It was until Alma started taking classes about Chicana studies that she started questioning more her internalized White supremacist views of success, language, and identity. Alma mentioned that

In the end though it is this idea that if you are brown, you do have to work twice as hard and I don't know that that necessarily went away. But at the same time, I had some leniency for myself to be able to be like wait, listen, you know, like you're doing a great job, you should also celebrate who you are. (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20)

The impact that Alma’s family and the classes on Chicana and Ethnic studies are evident on the way her self-identity has developed by questioning and working to dismantle internalized White supremacist views.

The influence that Chicana studies and Ethnic studies courses had on Alma during college also helped her question and dismantle some of her own views on her self-identity as Latina and as a bilingual person; internalized by implicit and explicit messages received throughout her education. Alma remembered the struggle of valuing her bilingualism as a teenager which to her “that was just more of a symptom of how English driven everything is and how there's not a lot of room for being bilingual or more so this push to assimilate so badly” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). Alma feels great pride in being bilingual and a Spanish speaker; to her, speaking Spanish “became this badge of honor” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). After years of implicit and explicit messages of assimilation and learning English as the ultimate goal, prevalent throughout her K-12 education, Chicana studies courses during college validated her identity as a bilingual student in this country.

Alma talked about her experience in being one of the few people of color in her teaching program. In fact, she was one of three Latinas, which made her feel disconnected and not



represented in the curriculum. It was until she took classes in Chicana Studies and Ethnic studies that made her feel connected and validated as a student of color. For Alma, with Chicana studies classes

. . . all this history of Latinos in the U.S. becomes relevant and even though they're Mexican-American, you know, like it was still sort of like wait a second. There's this whole other set of identity and history and culture that I have never known about, and it awakened that idea of language and social justice just brought together. (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20).

Alma recognizes the impact that Ethnic studies and Chicana studies classes had on questioning and dismantling the negative internalized ideas in regards to her skin color, her Latinx identity, and the use of Spanish in public. According to her, “if I didn't have those strong connections to my culture, my family and my language, I wouldn't have experienced those conversations of let's dismantle this” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). Alma’s experiences, as well as the rest of the participants, will be further explored in the following section when addressing the research questions.

## **Case 2: Armando**

The biggest asset I bring as a Latino teacher is that sense of community . . . I feel like that has also afforded me a lot of relationships with students and families, . . . specifically my Latino families feel very comfortable with reaching out to me and calling me and connecting . . .they see that I've been through similar things that their family has or that their kid has, and I think that it also speaks volumes to have a teacher like that when there's not many Hispanic or Latino teachers.

-Armando, TWI Educator, Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20

Armando has been an educator for three years in a two-way immersion (TWI) program in Minnesota. He immigrated to this country at the age of seven. When discussing the label he feels comfortable using to identify himself in regards to ethnicity, Armando does not see a difference between labels like Hispanic or Latinx. He understands that for some people the labels have different connotations, “but for me it doesn’t influence me that much” (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20). He identifies as Mexican, Latino or Hispanic. For Armando, one of the things that he is proud to identify as is an immigrant, and as a Dreamer<sup>11</sup>. According to him,

One of the things that I'm really proud of is being a dreamer. I think that that's my self-identity that changed over time where, you know, there's the idea of immigrants living in the shadows where I feel like I totally identify with that, where I was living in the shadows and maybe I was embarrassed or not proud or ashamed of being an immigrant and it wasn't until maybe I was 16 years old that I truly hit rock my rock bottom of being embarrassed or ashamed of being an undocumented immigrant. (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20).

Armando understood at a young age that there were limitations imposed on him by others because of his status as an undocumented immigrant in this country. Armando overcame some of these limitations when President Obama signed DACA into existence (Hinojosa, 2020), opening the door to many undocumented immigrants for better opportunities. In the case of Armando, it granted the opportunity to go to college and get an education. Armando has made the decision to

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<sup>11</sup> Maria Hinojosa (2020) describes the struggles to get the DREAM Act passed as law and how it took many demonstrations from DRAMERs, undocumented activists, to get President Obama to take action and create DACA, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival program. As Hinojosa (2020) explains, “It was not a gift from a benevolent leader. It was the result of public shaming of a president who didn’t understand the ire and disappointment and heart of these determined activists. On June 15, 2012, ten days after the demonstrations began, Obama released a statement on immigration and signed DACA into existence” (p. 248). It is also important to note that the qualifications for this program “. . . included many restrictions and intensified the false dichotomy between good immigrants and bad immigrants . . . only ‘perfect’ immigrants got to apply” (Hinojosa, 2020, p. 248).

share that part of his story with his students and his families every year. For him, it is a way to connect with his immigrant students. According to Armando, “no matter where they immigrated from that's just something that we have in common and again and just affords me and lets me connect with them at a different level that maybe another teacher wouldn't be able to” (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20).

Coming from an immigrant family and being an immigrant instilled in Armando a feeling of responsibility to be successful in school. Armando was made aware that his “family gave everything up so [he] could have a better future” (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20). He recognizes that “that was a lot to carry on one’s shoulders . . . carrying the sacrifices, and the dreams of your parents” (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20). The impact that this had on Armando was that made him want “to continue with [his] education, not so much the way they talked about education, or the way that they emphasized education” (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20) but the sacrifices made by his parents to come to this country. Furthermore, Armando was aware that his “family had sacrificed so much to come here. Then [he] was able to capitalize on that and to make it the best that I could” (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20) to be successful. He did not always feel “like education was the only way to be successful, but [he] felt like it was a path with the least resistance in a way” (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20). Failing in school was more than failing himself, for Armando it would mean failing his parents, which to him it further shows the self-imposed weight on his shoulders he was carrying.

In addition to the experience of being an immigrant and the desire to succeed in order to take upon the opportunity provided by his parents by moving to this country, Armando also recognized the potential paths awaiting him if he did not do well in school. Armando claims that

I feel like it was the climate that I grew up in as far as the movies, and seeing cousins

who were maybe selling drugs, or seeing cousins who are maybe still living with their parents in their 30s. Not that there's anything wrong with that but I just knew . . . if I failed my parents' sacrifice . . . "giving everything up for my future" would have been for nothing and I think that was like, you know, my biggest, you know, push to wanting to continue with education. (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20)

At the same time, Armando faced some struggles when his family told him that education was good for him. To him, "it was always hard to believe . . . when somebody tells you to do something, but they didn't do it themselves" (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20). However, Armando acknowledged that his family did not fully understand the way the education system works in this country and that they did their best with what they knew.

As Armando reflected on his school experience in the United States, he talked about the impact that having a teacher whom he "bumped heads" with but "never gave up" on him had a big impact on Armando; this was in high school. Armando remembers the time this teacher showed his class the film *Stand and Deliver* where he got to learn about Jaime Escalante.

Armando made an immediate connection. According to him,

. . . just seeing Jaime Escalante in that movie . . . the way he influenced students and the way he connected with his students. He changed their lives. That is what Mr. J did in my high school years where I feel like I was kind of lost. I feel like he showed me the way and not only like saying this is the way but he said that this is a way, you can choose whatever way you want to take and you shape it. I feel like to me, you know, again being in a country for the first time as a high school student, where no one in my family had an idea of what the hell was going on in high school, to having this person who now said if you do this this and this, you know. If your dream is to go to college, this is how you can

do it. If your dream is to be this, this is how you can do it. (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20)

That mentorship was influential for Armando. To him, “that was the most influential thing about school and not even the math or the social studies or anything like that. Just having that relationship and that mentorship from him” (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20). This particular experience influenced Armando in his current practice as an educator, which will be discussed in the findings section.

One of the first memories Armando has after arriving in the United States was that he was introduced to a completely different educational system than the one he was used to. According to Armando, he felt like the way he performed academically drastically changed and moved him from the top to the bottom of “the education game” (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20). He had attended gifted and talented camps in Mexico, but when he moved to this country, he was placed in remedial classes and ESL classes. Armando does not remember how he learned English. Reflecting now as an adult, he feels like “a part of me and my identity which you know, I feel like just shows a lot of struggle, a lot of trauma, you know, having to learn a different language” (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20).

Being new to this system of education, Armando had to navigate through it on his own. For Armando going through the struggles of figuring out the system granted him the opportunity to take this role of guidance for his sisters. Armando claims that he valued his education and his experience even more because he had to sacrifice a lot to make it.

While Armando reflected on his experiences as a student, he also talked about how some of his classes and some of the messages he received in school was that he needed to assimilate in order to succeed. Armando claims that “I feel like overtime sadly to be more successful in school, I had to . . . suppress my Latino identity and try to conform or be more comfortable with

being White” (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20). This included the way he dressed, the way he talked, his whole persona. He also claims that “. . . in this country, White men are what are looked as the ideal or the goal. So, I feel like that's one part of my identity that in a way I had to sacrifice to get to where I am” (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20). Even classes that were supposed to help him be successful, Armando recognized that in order to be successful and achieve academically, he had to learn to be White.

The covert message of equating Whiteness with success made Armando internalize this idea that he had to sacrifice his Latinx identity in order to conform. According to Armando,

I feel like at the end of the day like I was sacrificing . . . my Hispanic or Latino identity to do these things that make people successful . . . changing the way that I talked, you know, maybe I talked a little with a little bit of slang, maybe I dressed, you know with baggy pants . . . and now you know having polo shirts and dress shirts. (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20).

The lack of role models who looked like Armando made him sacrifice his Latinx identity in order to acquire academic success. For Armando, when he was not dressing White, he was not succeeding. Armando realized that “teachers didn’t want to make a relationship with [him]. Maybe teachers in a way were scared” (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20). Armando was not accepted by teachers for his identities or uniqueness, so he had to assimilate. These experiences make Armando wonder “how did I even make it through this system, you know, like how am I even here, you know, with this system that was not designed for me or people who look like me or people who speak the language that I do” (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20).

### **Case 3: Noemi**

I think my identity has shaped my beliefs about education in that I desire to be a teacher and

advocate for students that are often marginalized by the public school system.

Throughout my experience in education and research, I have always heard about the lack of educational attainment of Latino youth within the U.S. public school system.

I was also always aware that there were very few Latino teachers in Minnesota, where I went through the majority of my schooling.

-Noemi, TWI Educator, Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20

Noemi has been an educator for twenty years, ten of those in a two-way immersion program in Minnesota. Noemi was born in Minnesota, but at the age of two her family moved to Mexico City. Due to economic struggles the country was facing in the 80s, Noemi's family relocated back to Minnesota when she was six years old. She identifies as Mexican American. Noemi describes herself as a bicultural person whose "ethnicity is a combination of the two cultures that [she has] lived being Mexican and American" (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). Nevertheless, she has found that "when people meet me in the United States, they don't know what I am because they can tell I'm not fully American by their definition" (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). At the same time, she has experienced similar struggles with identity when she is in Mexico, where she is called "*la güera*, *la gringa* and I don't quite necessarily fit in that area either" (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). Noemi is a bilingual person living in a bilingual world, she feels that she lives within a third culture. Noemi claims that "it was really important for me to be able to say I am *Mexicana* and I wanted to learn Spanish well" (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). This came from her desire to stay connected with family members back in Mexico. Furthermore, for Noemi "from a very young age, it was really important that I maintain those friendships and relationships with family abroad" (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20) so she decided to choose a second major in Spanish in order to be confident in the language.

Being bilingual has influenced Noemi's identity "because I like to be able to live in a community where I can switch back and forth between languages when I want to" (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). Furthermore, Noemi feels that her relationship with her family is stronger compared to other relatives because of her ability to communicate in Spanish. Noemi's sociolinguistic ideology of speaking English and Spanish well and not mixing the two languages is influenced by her father. According to her, "My father though did influence me very specifically that you either speak one language or the other, you don't mix them when you're speaking and so for the most part that's what I do" (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). She also acknowledges that there might be instances where mixing the two languages is needed when "you can't say in one language or the other that maybe I would then slip . . . a language word here and there because it just can't be expressed in the other one" (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20).

Besides the messages received from his family that inform Noemi's sociolinguistic ideology, Noemi's family has also influenced her on her decision to go to college. According to her, family always encouraged her to do her best she could in school, even when she struggled, as an EL student, with reading and comprehension. Even though there were some struggles faced by Noemi, her family did not let her lose her focus on graduating and going to college. In fact, "It was never a question of whether or not I was going to study. It was, what was I going to study?" (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). Noemi always felt encouraged to "try moving myself beyond what I could have imagined and they were always looking for ways to encourage me in that way" (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). Education for Noemi's family was an expectation "even if in the future you don't necessarily use that career path. You should still get an education" (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). This was also drawn from Noemi's father's experience studying in Mexico to be a tour guide but not being able to find a job in that area after



moving to Minnesota. However, “he was fond of the history and all of the facts that he learned” (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20) that he was able to support Noemi on her educational journey as well. “And so, I think he has skills and he was able to show me and show me that education was important because of that” (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20).

As a third-grade student, Noemi was influenced by her teacher when she felt her culture and her family were not only accepted, but celebrated. She remembers a class project where she got to research about a topic and make a presentation about it, which also included inviting a family member to share about the topic as well. Noemi’s topic was on piñatas,

. . . so, I got to research piñatas and share with my class how they're made and how we use them in celebration and I was able to invite my dad to come in and talk about them.

He loved art. So, he drew this fantastic picture of a piñata and we brought one in to show and . . . I remember feeling really proud of being able to share about something that was special to me as a kid in third grade and my culture, and proud of my dad that he could come in and experience that with me. (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20)

This experience had a lasting impact on Noemi. “I was in love with the idea of being a teacher because I really loved my teacher and I thought he was just the neatest person in the world” (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). Her teacher was an older man, an elder, a great source of respect.

At the same time that Noemi reflected on her influential teacher and her positive experience, she acknowledged the fact that most of her school experience was one of language oppression and lack of representation. According to Noemi “I remember that early on when I first came back from Mexico. I was learning English. I was trying to catch up with my peers and I was told that I could no longer speak Spanish at home” (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). Noemi went to school in the 80s when, in her experience, “the theory was you needed to completely

forget the home language and only speak English” (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). Her family, wanting to show respect to the school teachers and school leaders in the school, they stopped speaking Spanish in the home. For Noemi, this meant losing some of her Spanish. Noemi still remembers “feeling offended that my parents were going to go along with this and I remember being angry about it and frustrated, but I couldn't really do much because I also had to respect my parents” (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20).

Noemi and her brother were “the only Mexican-American kids in our classes and school. Services like ESL weren't available at the school we attended, even though it was a large city public school” (Journal transcript, 1/5/21). Noemi also remembers that the level of representation of Latinx educators has not changed enough in the last 30 years since she was a student in Minnesota. According to her “My brother and I didn't grow up with teachers who ‘looked’ like us”(Journal transcript, 1/5/21). In addition to the lack of the representation teachers were not “teaching with culturally relevant pedagogy” (Journal transcript, 1/5/21). This instilled in Noemi the importance of representation and the need for students of color to “see teachers of color in positions of power” (Journal transcript, 1/5/21).

Noemi remembers her time in college and reflected on some microaggressions she faced from educators and university advisors. For example, she feels like “sometimes people can assume things about you as a Latinx student in college and they're not necessarily always going to be the most encouraging” (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). This came after an experience with an advisor at the university Noemi was studying. Noemi wanted to take an extra semester to graduate in order to be able to obtain a license in K-12 Spanish, in addition to her Elementary license. Noemi wanted this in order to have more opportunities to get a job in a bilingual school, but her advisor did not see it that way. Noemi felt that her advisor was not taking into

consideration her desires and her career plans and just wanted her to graduate.

For Noemi, being able to major in Spanish while she was studying to become a teacher made her feel “more encouraged and seen as a student of color, that I could do much more than maybe my education professors were able to see within me and I know that there were issues in that education department” (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). Noemi witnessed how an African American professor in the education department “was having an issue with students who were questioning her authority; they were being very disrespectful in class and these were the students that were the TAs in the Educational Department” (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). Noemi brought her concerns to the head of the department about how unprofessional and racist these TAs were and “because of my standing up for this teacher that teacher continued to take me under her wing for many years after that” (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). Noemi acknowledged that this unprofessional and racist behavior from the TAs “was modeled from the professors towards this other professor and the students were catching on at this behavior and just being very disrespectful” (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20).

Noemi’s connection with the Spanish department was stronger and she felt more valued and encouraged to research topics of language and bilingual education, which developed her understanding in those areas with the support of her professors. In addition to that intellectual connection between bilingual education research and language, Noemi was able to make connections within the Spanish department and was offered a position to oversee students studying abroad in Guatemala and teaching introductory Spanish courses to college students. After ten years, she decided to move into public education and work in TWI programs.

#### **Case 4: Jacky**

I feel like it's the beauty of showing that we don't have to close off a language just because you

are in the United States. You have an amazing opportunity to learn two different languages at the same time. So, I feel like I chose this program because not only does it help prove my belief in speaking two languages, but also supports our future generations to understand that speaking two languages is great.

-Jacky, TWI Educator, Dialogue transcript, 12/11/20

Jacky is a brand new to teaching, this is her first year in the profession and teaching in a two-way immersion program in Minnesota. Jacky was born in Minnesota and identifies as Mexican American. Jacky is aware and proud of her immigrant heritage. Her parents immigrated to Minnesota from Mexico. The message she has received from her family is that she is Mexican and American because she was born here. To her, “I feel pride in both . . . when you have two cultures you kind of have to deal with two things at the same time” (Dialogue transcript, 12/11/20). When Jacky identifies as Mexican American, she also describes that she is equally both “I can't say I'm more than the other. I'm, you know, growing up in American lifestyle but also have two Mexican immigrant parents that came from Mexico and they bring their beliefs and culture along with it” (Dialogue transcript, 12/11/20). At the same time, Jacky admitted that growing up there was some confusion in regards to what label to use to identify herself. She has heard Chicana, Latina, Hispanic, and Mexican-American, which to her any of those labels are fine by her, but she gravitates more towards Mexican-American where both her cultures are identified and celebrated.

Jacky also identifies as bilingual. However, having gone to school in an English-only system, Jacky feels she is more fluent in English than Spanish; which she considered herself at a conversational level. Regardless of the level of Spanish she speaks, being bilingual has helped Jacky with the development of her identity. For Jacky, being bilingual “that's who I am. That's

my background” (Dialogue transcript, 12/11/20).

According to Jacky her family has been influential in her becoming the person she is today. Her parents immigrated to this country for a better life and future for their children. Jacky states that the message from her parents has been “we came to the United States because we wanted something better for you” (Dialogue transcript, 12/11/20). In particular Jacky’s mom’s message has been “I don’t want you to be a typical, you know, in Mexico the culture is usually the woman cooks, cleans, you’re basically taking care of the family . . . I want you to be independent and just do your best in school” (Dialogue transcript, 12/11/20). According to Jacky, her mom is the breadwinner in her family who wanted something different for her daughter by coming to this country.

Jacky’s parents are immigrants who only went to elementary (her mother) and middle school (her father), yet they always spoke highly about education. Jacky remembers how her parents encouraged her to do well in school and in all subjects because she never knew where she would find her passion. Jacky’s parents worked two jobs and the way Jacky and her brother showed their gratitude and respect to her parents was by doing their homework after coming home from school. Jacky “didn’t want to be a burden or have [her] parents worry about her” (Dialogue transcript, 12/11/20). The only thing Jacky’s parents expected from her was to get her school work done.

According to Jacky, she had positive experiences throughout her educational path. A moment that stands out to her is her time in middle school. She had a strong network of friends who were Latina and who came from similar backgrounds as hers; with at least one parent immigrating from Mexico. She made friends with people from different backgrounds, but felt a stronger connection with her Latina friends.

In addition to her group of friends, teachers were influential in Jacky's journey. She was able to develop genuine relationships with her teachers and that made her feel connected and valued. According to Jacky, ". . . my teachers at that time in middle school. They were amazing. Whatever I feel like they were just being themselves and they kept it very real with me . . . I really appreciated that. I guess that's what made me love school too" (Dialogue transcript, 12/11/20). Jacky attended a very diverse school in regards to the student population. There was a high population of Latinxs at her middle school, where she heard conversations in English and Spanish in the hallways. Jacky felt that her use of Spanish at school was never discouraged. In fact, Jacky mentioned,

I haven't had that experience where a teacher said, 'What are you guys talking about?' I mean, yeah, they do but even in English. But it's more like the teachers were never like, 'Oh, can you speak English?' It makes me uncomfortable what you're talking about. I never had that experience. (Dialogue transcript, 12/11/20)

Jacky felt that teachers were genuinely interested and open to learn about her culture by asking questions and having conversations about culture and identity. Those experiences instilled a sense of pride in Jacky about her identity as Mexican-American and bilingual living in Minnesota.

In school Jacky was part of the gifted and talented program as well as taking AP courses in high school. For her these classes opened the doors to opportunities her parents did not have and she did not have to struggle as much as they did. When she got to college, Jacky stated "I was able to do anything without having limitations or restrictions that my parents faced" (Dialogue transcript, 12/11/20). In addition, going to college also means that Jacky has become a role model for her family members. She is someone who has made it through high school and

college and can talk about the journey with her cousins during family gatherings.

The narratives of the four cases start giving a glimpse into these Latinx bilingual educators' journeys to teaching and the developments of their beliefs about education. It is through their self-identity formation influenced by their lived experiences (i.e., immigration, family experiences, learning English, etc.) and their institutional experiences (i.e., experiences in school, navigating the educational system, etc.) that this journey to TWI education is connected.

Table 1 states the major findings related to each of the two research questions. In the following pages, I present the findings to answer the two research questions of this study.

**Table 1**

*Research Questions Major Findings*

<b>RQ1: How are Latinx dual language teachers' lived experiences connected with their decisions to work in two-way immersion programs?</b>
1. Latinx bilingual educators decide to work in two-way immersion programs to serve as role models for Latinx students.
2. Latinx bilingual educators decide to work in TWI programs because they feel connected to the Latinx community in these programs.
3. Latinx bilingual educators who attended K-12 monolingual (English) public schools are self-conscious about their abilities to speak Spanish fluently and to teach (academic) Spanish in TWI programs.
<b>RQ2: How are Latinx dual language teachers' lived experiences connected with their beliefs about education?</b>
1. The experiences of Latinx bilingual educators in K-12 systems influence the development of their beliefs about education.
2. Ethnic and Chicax studies courses, as well as the opportunity to take classes in other departments during their teacher preparation programs, raised the level of political consciousness of Latinx bilingual educators.

For the sake of clarity, I re-wrote the research questions followed by the major findings that answers that question organized as subheadings. As I address the major findings, secondary findings will be included as well. In the next section, I will address the three major findings connected to question 1, followed by the two major findings connected to question 2.

### **Major Findings**

**Research Question #1: How are Latinx dual language teachers' lived experiences connected with their decisions to work in two-way immersion programs?**

**Latinx bilingual educators decide to work in two-way immersion programs to serve as role models for Latinx students.**

Even though no experience is the same, there were some commonalities between the participants and their stories. For example, two-way immersion (TWI) education was not the first goal for these educators. For most of them, the first time they heard about the possibility of teaching in a TWI program was while they were searching for places to complete their practicums. However, there was already a desire within the participants to put to good use their experiences in order to help people, which is what brought them to teaching in the first place. Their decision to work in a TWI program was influenced by their desire to change the de facto American monolingual model as the ultimate goal for students in the United States. At the same time, these educators wanted to work with Latinx youth in order to have a positive impact in their educational success and attainment. They wanted their students to experience having a Latinx teacher as it was something they never experienced in school growing up.

In Minnesota, where this study was conducted, 66.3% of Latinx students graduated from high school in 2017 (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). The participants in this study made it through the educational path and have broken off of the “cycle of educational failure”



(Bybee, 2014), which made one of the participants, Armando, wonder “how did I even make it through this system, you know, like how am I even here, you know, with this system that was not designed for me or people who look like me or people who speak the language that I do” (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20).

The lack of Latinx teacher representation was acknowledged by all of the participants as an influence in their decision to become teachers. For example, Alma said “for me it just kind of reinforced the idea of how valuable my work is because even within education, within immersion education, there's not a lot of us” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20).

**Influence of the lack of diversity in the teaching profession on Latinx bilingual educators’ decision to work in TWI programs.** The diversity of the student population in Minnesota public schools, –30 percent Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color (BIPOC) children (Williams & Ebinger, 2014)–, is not reflected in the teaching population in the state, where “only four percent of teachers identify as people of color or American Indian [and] . . . where [t]his percentage has remained stagnant for decades” (Fetzer, Griffin, Leonard, & Thomas, 2018, p. 3). Noemi went to school in one of the two largest Minnesota public school districts in the 80s. She accepts that “Certainly things have changed in Minneapolis in the last 30 years but representation of teachers of color especially Latinx teachers hasn’t changed enough” (Journal transcript, 1/5/21). Noemi and her brother did not grow up with teachers that looked like them. In addition, she was not exposed to culturally relevant pedagogy. She claims that she is called to both of those things as a teacher, being someone students can relate to, at the same time that she also ensures the implementation of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Jacky connected her experiences as Latinx and bilingual with the influence those experiences had on her BIPOC students and their ability to connect with each other. Jacky and

the rest of the participants use their experiences to connect with the students in their classrooms.

Jacky acknowledged that

I just felt like it's more motivational for students to see like oh she was in the same shoes as I was or . . . they want to connect with someone who looks like them and especially younger kids, you know, you always want to go with someone who looks like you who speaks like you or you know even having the same similarity. So, I feel like they, my students of color, come to me and say like they just feel safe. (Dialogue transcript, 12/11/20)

Feeling safe and comfortable is one of the effects that having a Latinx teacher has on Latinx bilingual students in TWI programs as witnessed and expressed by the participants in this study. This is expressed by the ways in which these participants strive to build communities that welcome Latinx and other students of color and in the incorporation of absented narratives in their practice. The outcome of that work is when students confide on these educators when they are experiencing difficulties at home or at school.

**The importance of Latinx teacher representation was identified by the participants as a motivator to teach.** The experience described above resonates with Williams and Ebinger's (2014) argument that BIPOC teachers have faced "the very same challenges that their students face, and thus can be better prepared to help students navigate these life challenges. Second, they serve as role models for their students, helping students to picture themselves as teachers, leaders, and experts" (p. 6). This was also voiced by Noemi. She believes that her role in a TWI program is essential because

. . . it is important for Latinx students to see that Latinx teachers that were educated in the U.S. (like them) can be educated professionals. In the same way, it is important for non-

Latinx students, especially White students, to see people of color in positions of leadership and power. (Journal transcript, 1/5/21).

Just as Quioco and Rios (2000) found in their research that ethnic identity was a motivation for Mexican American bilinguals to go into teaching, they also found that the desire to be role models and to make a difference for BIPOC students was a motivation for this group of educators. Noemi stated above how important her role is in TWI programs because she is in a position of power her BIPOC students can aspire to be too. It was interesting that she also acknowledged the impact that her presence had on non-Latinx students. Noemi knows that “Depending on the White student’s experience, especially in Minnesota, where we are less diverse than other areas in the nation, they may have limited exposure to people of color in positions of power” (Journal transcript, 1/5/21). Even if TWI education was not the first choice for many of the participants, these teachers recognize the importance of having educators who reflect the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the student population.

These four Latinx bilingual educators have returned to their home communities (Urrieta, 2007). At the same time, their desire and decision to teach goes beyond being a mere “representation.” The participants in this study shared the belief that the significance of having educators of color who are also aware of systemic inequities negatively impacting Latinxs is crucial for Latinx students’ success. These educators wanted to be in a position where they could “avoid other people experiencing” what they went through by advocating for their students and questioning inequitable practices. For example, Noemi stated

I was well aware of the lack of educational success or attainment that Latino youth and Black youth face in these societal systems of education and I wanted to be able to use my culture and language and really use that within the school setting and interact with

students and give them an experience that I didn't have growing up. I never had a Latino teacher. So I think that was kind of my hope and dream when I was going into education.

(Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20)

This also connects with Alma's decision to work in TWI programs. For her coming into teaching and working in these programs allowed her to use her lived experiences in order to help others.

Alma stated, "I know my community is really underrepresented in education and if I could be that teacher to a kid or a family then I felt it [the struggle] was worth it, and it was this meaningful exchange for my own culture, for giving back, so that other people wouldn't struggle in that way" (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20).

These educators decided to give back to their communities by becoming allies, advocates, and role models for students with similar backgrounds and other BIPOC students. This finding correlates with the work by prior research presented in Chapter two (Bybee, 2004; Dubetz, 2014; Jiménez, Ruiz, & Smith, 2020; Ochoa, 2007; Urrieta, 2007; Valencia, 2010a). In fact, Bybee (2004) states that "the desire to be a role model was an important motivation for Mexican American bilingual teaching candidates" (p. 62) when compared to their White peers. For example, in this study, Alma understands that her role in the classroom is to be a face not a lot of kids get to see. She explained that

I felt that I could be very useful and I could be a face that not a lot of kids get to see. And then, if I could reverse some of that, if in any way shape or form I could reverse any of that like White supremacy, any of that like internalized hate for your own self, you know, I would take it. I would want to do that so that no other kids could feel that . . . really terrible way or so that families could feel like they could connect. (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20)

Alma's understanding of her role and the impact that her presence can have on students' academic path is also shared by Armando. He claimed, "for many students, I represent someone in education who looks like them or shares a similar story - something that I didn't really have growing up - and representation alone, having a good example to look up to, can be powerful" (Dialogue transcript, 12/24/20).

During my conversations with these educators, I kept thinking about Godina-Martínez's (2010) study where she labeled as 'well-meaning others' those colleagues of color who failed to realize how the system they were a part of "was responsible for the systemic failure of Raza students and students of color. They failed to see that the maestr@s, in their 'success' in having 'made-it' as educators, were the exception and not the rule" (p. 104). There is this clear notion among the participants of this study that Latinx educational paths are full of obstacles and they are the exception rather than the rule, which is what brought them to teaching and has influenced their beliefs about education. As it will be discussed below, their decision to become educators derives from a connection that these Latinx bilingual educators feel with the Latinx population in these programs.

**Latinx bilingual educators decide to work in two-way immersion programs because they feel connected to the Latinx community in these programs.**

As it was mentioned in the last section and discussed in Chapter 2, Latinx students need educators of color who are also conscious of systemic inequities negatively impacting BIPOC students. Valencia (2010a) brought forward multiple reasons on the value of having Latinx teachers, one of them being the notion of shared identity between these educators and their students. The bilingual Latinx educators in this study take their role in the classroom as more than only a face that students can relate to, but their decision to teach and their beliefs about

education revolve around a commitment to improve the educational experiences of Latinx students, which show a desire to be role model *con ganas*.

Besides wanting to be role models to their BIPOC students, particularly Latinx students, these bilingual Latinx educators decided to teach in TWI programs because they feel a connection to the Latinx community that are part of these programs. The experience of being raised bilingual and coming from immigrant parents, or being immigrants, themselves have influenced the educational journey and the identity formation of each participant. According to Gomez, Rodriguez, and Agosto (2008), Latinx teachers use their own personal experiences and cultural knowledge to “understand students’ ways of knowing and behavior/s, and seek ways to incorporate students’ cultural and family backgrounds into formal and informal curricula (p. 269). This again connects with the acknowledgement of their shared identity with their Latinx students and their commitment to be role models *con ganas* for these students. This idea of “con ganas” will be explored further in the chapter.

**The shared identity with students and families motivates Latinx bilingual educators to teach in two-way immersion programs.** In their study Ramirez and de la Cruz (2016) projected that by 2050, the Latinx student population will increase more than 150%. In addition, Valencia (2010b) presented a projection in his study regarding the change in racial/ethnic demographics in the United States.

The projections suggest that the White population, which accounted for 69.1 percent of the general U.S. population in 2000, will gradually decrease in proportion over the next ten decades. By 2060, Whites are expected to lose majority status, and by 2100, they will only account for about four of every ten people in the U.S. population. [. . . The Chicano/Latino population, which comprised 12.6 percent of the total U.S. population in

2000, is projected to constitute 33.3 percent of the general population in 2100. (pp. 56-57)

This change in population creates, according to Bybee (2014), a demographic imperative, which “frames the notion of a teacher/student gap in race and ethnicity with special urgency and recognizes that the population of predominantly low-income students of color . . . will become a nation-wide majority in the next few decades” (p. 59). All the statistical information presented above is to illustrate the need of BIPOC teachers, particularly Latinx educators. In order to address the change of student demographics in public schools, there needs to be educators who are committed to provide positive experiences for BIPOC students. In the case of the participants in this study, their connections with the Latinx community influenced their decision to work in TWI programs. They understand the importance of representation for students in public schools. For example, for Alma her identity as Latinx and her language connect with her decision to work in TWI programs. In particular, Alma has always felt a strong connection to her Latinx families as she understands the struggles that Latinx parents go through in navigating the educational system in this country.

According to Ochoa (2007), there is research that suggests that teachers of color have high expectations for students with whom they share the same racial/ethnic background. In addition to sharing similar race/ethnic backgrounds with their students, these Latinx bilingual educators also share similar experiences with language identity and immigrant experiences. Being able to relate to families and students has been very meaningful for the participants in this study and a reaffirmation that they made the right decision in deciding to work in TWI programs.

Ek, Sánchez, and Quijada (2013) argue that Latinx teachers often serve as role models to marginalized students who have a preference for teachers who share their ethnic identity and

bilingualism. In regards to ethnic identity, both Jacky and Noemi shared the impact that their presence in the classroom had on students. As a second-grade teacher, Jacky heard a student make a comment to another student that he had never seen him smile or talk in class before and this made Jacky “so happy to hear a student comment that about another student . . . to have that student make a change because of me like that's the best way to know that I was supposed to become a teacher for those students that need that connection” (Dialogue transcript, 12/11/20).

Regarding students’ connection with language, Ek, Sánchez, and Quijada (2013) argue that teachers need to learn “to accept, validate, and leverage their future Latina/o students’ languages; they must begin to put an end to the insidious cycle of creating language hierarchies that, in turn, perpetuate acts of linguistic violence” (p. 216). TWI programs create opportunities to disrupt linguistic violence by using Spanish, a historically marginalized language, as language of instruction. This connects with Valverde’s (2006) argument that TWI programs raise the status of the second language so that it is at an equal level to the country’s first language. The participants in the study value their bilingual identity and decided to work in TWI programs because of their connection and experiences with language growing up. Noemi, for example, discovered the impact that using Spanish in the classroom can have in students’ ability to feel connected. When she was completing a practicum during her teaching preparation program, Noemi introduced to a group of kindergarteners in Spanish first and then in English. Noemi said that she never forgot that moment because

. . . the moment I started speaking in Spanish, there was a little girl whose eyes just opened up wide and she looked at me. It was the first time that I found out later that she had made a connection in that classroom all year. And this was January. So, all from September through January she sat there, she followed the instructions, but she didn't



really make a connection until she heard Spanish spoken and saw that I could interact with her that way that she couldn't do with her White teacher. (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20)

This is one of the reasons Noemi decided to work in TWI programs, with Latinx youth, because she knew the influence that language has in making connections and building relationships with Latinx students. Alma also discovered that by using her Spanish language, she could connect and feel like a resource for her community. By being a TWI educator, Alma felt like she “could make a more equitable difference within a program like this one because it was something that could essentially be an equalizer for families . . . and helps kids feel connected to their school and their language” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20).

Besides connections made along ethnic identity and language, the participants also share the immigrant experience with the Latinx families and students in these programs. Two of the participants were born in another country and moved at a young age. These two participants were also undocumented and had to face another set of challenges that influenced their decision to teach and how they approach making connections with students. The other two participants were born in Minnesota, but had the experience of being raised by immigrant parents and that also shaped their identity and their ability to connect with families going through the same experiences. Based on my conversation with the participants, understand the “psychological process that accompanies the immigrant experience [which they use] to be able to connect with their students [and the students’ families]” (Watkins-Goffman, 2001, p. 1). Armando purposefully shares his experiences as a dreamer with his students in order to build connections with his immigrant students, regardless of their status or place of origin.

### **A connection with the struggles faced as they navigated the educational system**

**brought Latinx bilingual educators to two-way immersion programs.** The connection between the educators in this study and the Latinx community in TWI program is influenced by their experiences growing up and navigating or seeing their parents struggle to navigate the educational system. There is an interconnection between their identities and their decision to work in these programs. In addition, as Expósito and Favela (2003) argue, “It takes great commitment on the part of teachers to effectively work with immigrant students and parents. Immigrant families frequently struggle with economic, social and language constraints that impact their understanding of, and integration into American public schools” (p. 73). These teachers are the people needed to make immigrant children and Latinx students with immigrant families feel at ease and connected. The educators in this study use not only their languages, but also their experiences to connect and advocate for their students and families. Just as it was discussed above, there is a need to diversify the teaching profession and recruit teachers from “the students’ own communities. [As demonstrated through the dialogues with the participants in this study] these would-be teachers have a unique knowledge of and sensitivity to the culture and language of this group; training them as teachers is the easier task” (Gándara & Contreras, 2009, p. 319).

In this regard, as it will be discussed below, Latinx bilinguals who have attended English-only K-12 systems in this country hold negative views of their Spanish language skills. This is significant because even if Latinx bilinguals raised in this country decide to become educators, they do not necessarily choose to work in TWI programs because they do not feel confident enough to teach academic Spanish. This illustrates a barrier that needs to be dismantled in order to recruit more Latinx bilinguals schooled in K-12 educational systems to serve as role models *con ganas* to our Latinx students.

**Latinx bilingual educators who attended K-12 monolingual (English) public schools are self-conscious about their abilities to speak Spanish fluently and to teach (academic) Spanish in two-way immersion programs.**

It has been documented that Latinx bilingual aspiring teachers have doubts about their ability to teach in bilingual settings (Bybee, 2014; Briceño, Rodríguez-Mojica, & Muñoz-Muñoz, 2018; Ruiz, Jiménez-Silva, & Smith, 2020), which according to the authors listed above those internalized views are a reflection of the lack of inclusion of the dialects as well as nonstandard varieties of Spanish language. In addition, this self-consciousness of their lack of academic language skills also shows the effects that a linguistically subtractive K-12 schooling has on multilingual speakers of a minoritized language; which results in Spanish language loss in English-only K-12 systems (Bybee, 2014; Briceño, Rodríguez-Mojica, & Muñoz-Muñoz, 2018; Ruiz, Jiménez-Silva, & Smith, 2020). The participants of this study also shared similar self-doubts about their linguistic competence to teach academic language to their students in TWI programs. For example, Jacky mentioned at one point during our conversation that when she was asked to teach in a TWI program by her student teaching supervisor, Jacky remembers feeling like “I don't know how I feel about my Spanish and even I was worried. I'm like I never really used the academic language in Spanish. How am I going to teach those kids those words?” (Dialogue transcript, 12/11/20). Jacky decided to teach in a TWI program because she wanted to learn the language while teaching to her students and because she knew the importance of her presence in the classroom to model being a language learner to her students. Only one of the participants, Noemi, majored in Spanish in college because for her

. . . it was really important for me to be able to say I am *Mexicana* and I wanted to learn Spanish well. I didn't want to not be able to communicate with family members. And so

from a very young age, it was really important that I maintain those friendships and relationships with family abroad and so I made it my desire to make it my second major when I was in college so that I could be confident in the language. (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20)

These two examples from the participants give a glimpse into the relationship between language and identity formation of Latinxs schooled in a monolingual system. According to Cervantes-Soon, (2014) “because language and identity must be understood in the context of the larger structure of our own society . . . [there needs to be a close examination of how Latinx students in this country develop their own identities] . . . as well as their perceptions of English and their native language (including nonstandard varieties of Spanish)” (p. 68). This study is engaging in that conversation by delving into the experiences of the participants in their school settings growing up and how those experiences influenced their decision to work in TWI programs.

Ek, Sánchez, and Quijada Cerecer (2013) also documented in their study that violence has marked the socialization of linguistic minority students and mainstream dominant culture. It has never been, according to them, benign or neutral. This argument resonated with the experiences of Alma and Armando. For example, when reflecting about his experience in school after arriving to Minnesota at the age of seven, Armando said

I don't really remember how I learned English, which I feel like that's also like a part of me and my identity which you know, I feel like it just shows a lot of struggle. I feel like it shows a lot of trauma, you know, having to learn a different language. (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20)

The idea of language and identity, which will be discussed below, is also used by González (1997) to describe the connection between language choice as a marker of identity. “Language is

not simply something that stands outside of experience and refers to it; rather, we use language to create a particular order” (p. 83). The four participants of this study hold strong bilingual identities, which are needed when they face systemic challenges to their bilingual work by powerful English-only policies (Dubetz, 2014). Yet, as this study looks into diversifying the teaching profession and bringing more bilingual Latinx teachers into TWI programs, there needs to be an analysis of how linguistic beliefs and practices of social groups and language build our social identities (González, 1997).

**The struggles with their identities as Latinx and bilinguals motivated Latinx bilingual educators to teach in two-way immersion programs; they are committed to change the experiences of their future Latinx students.** Language is central to the culture of a group (Valverde, 2006). In fact, “language brings to life the group's identity and concept of self . . . language is more than a critical part of culture; it is a necessary tool that maintains and promotes group culture” (Valverde, 2006, p. 23). Latinx identities, as Ek et al. (2013) state, “are constructed not only through Spanish, but also through its varieties” (p. 210). Gándara and Contreras (2009) argue that “many scholars have noted that language is intimately bound up with identity and that the choice of whose language will be used in the public sphere is also about political power and ‘belongingness’” (p. 142). For the participants in this study, their ethnic identity as Latinx has also been influenced by their bilingualism. For example, Noemi feels like she lives in a third culture, where she sees herself as a bilingual person living in a bilingual world, where she is not completely Mexican, nor completely American, but a combination of the two. According to her, “I think bilingualism certainly influences my identity because I like to be able to live in a community where I can switch back and forth between languages when I want to” (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20).

A negotiation of their identity with the dominant culture, in public school settings, was experienced by the participants in this study. Alma, for example, started learning English once she arrived in Minnesota from El Salvador, but it was coming at a cost; she was forgetting words in Spanish. It was Alma's mother that reinforced the idea of not forgetting her Spanish because of the connection to her roots. At school, Alma received the message that learning English was the ultimate goal and her bilingualism was seen as a barrier to overcome. There were moments where Alma was caught on "this tug of war within myself because here it was the allure of Whiteness on one side and here is my family, my roots, my ancestors, and my traditions on the other side" (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). This demonstrates the battles Latinx students face as they navigate a system that is not made with them in mind. Alma recognized that the strong connections with her family and relationship with her culture, and language made it possible for her to make it through that side. "Whereas if I didn't have those strong ties, [according to Alma], and strong family life, it would have definitely been more leaning towards the idea of forgetting and being this thing that will lead you to success" (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). Armando came to this country from Mexico at the age of 7. Armando shared that he learned he needed to change his Latinx identity to fit into a White model in order to succeed at school. Based on his monolingual educational experience, Armando does not feel like he could keep a balance between her language skills in both English and Spanish. For him, ". . . living in America, sadly, English kind of became my dominant language" (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20).

The critical reflection on those experiences while growing up makes these participants ideal role models for bilingual Latinx students who also happen to be facing the same struggles between language and identity in public schools. As it was mentioned before, by Gándara and Contreras (2009), training on pedagogical skills is an easier task, but having gone through the

experiences of being bilingual and Latinx in Minnesota is not something that can be learned from a book. The educators in this study use not only their languages, but also their experiences to connect and advocate for their students and families. Just as it was discussed above, there is a need to diversify the teaching profession and recruit teachers from “the students’ own communities. So, the presence and critical commitment of these role models *con ganas* reinforce the argument of needing “homegrown” educators from the communities these students in TWI programs come from in order to provide different school experiences for them (Dee, 2005; Kohli, 2012; Reyes McGovern, 2013; Urrieta, 2007).

**Even though they are self-conscious about their Spanish language abilities, Latinx bilingual teachers recognize the importance of their presence in programs like two-way immersion education.** In her study, Godina-Martínez (2010) found that the experiences of Raza educators as Raza students, which many students continue to face today, is what brought them to teaching in the first place. In regards to the participants in this study, regardless of the doubts on their abilities to teach academic Spanish to their students in TWI programs, they decided to work in TWI programs because of the difference they can make on the educational experiences of Latinx students. Alma, for example, knew she wanted to use her Spanish in teaching, so even though she continues to feel self-conscious about her Spanish, “I think it also kind of shaped for me what the other side looks like” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). This is something that Jacky is very open with her students about being a learner along with them, if she is not able to say something properly in Spanish, her students will help her, just as she would to them if they made a mistake. For Jacky, “As my students learned I was also like them, they were more motivated to help me in my own Spanish by improving in their own Spanish. The community is more like a two-way relationship rather than the teacher knowing everything” (Journal transcript, 12/12/20).

Latinx students in TWI programs need role models *con ganas* like Armando, Alma, Jacky and Noemi. According to Valencia (2010b), the growing shortage of Latinx educators “is a concern for all in that it works against the need to have a multicultural teaching force at a time when our school system is becoming more and more culturally diverse” (p. 37). Educators like Armando, Alma, Jacky, and Noemi are needed as role models for Latinx students in TWI programs and to promote racial/ethnic understanding and respect among all students (Valencia, 2010b). The experiences of these bilingual Latinx educators serves as the foundation for deciding to work in education and also as a lens through which these educators’ beliefs about education have developed. As it will be discussed below, the experiences of these current Latinx bilingual educators as students in K-12 educational systems influenced their beliefs about education. The following paragraphs address research question two, which focus on the development of these Latinx bilingual educators’ beliefs about education.

**Research Question #2: How are Latinx dual language teachers’ lived experiences connected with their beliefs about education?**

**The experiences of Latinx bilingual educators in K-12 systems influence the development of their beliefs about education.**

Every belief and attitude are political (Expósito & Favela, 2003). The Latinx bilingual teachers’ beliefs about education have been influenced by their experiences as students in K-12 public schools in Minnesota. This finding connects with Expósito and Favela’s (2003) argument that the beliefs of bilingual students’ teachers “are grounded in life experiences that deem immigrant students’ language and culture as assets or deficits, depending on the teachers’ worldview” (p. 74). Alma, along with the other participants, shared that she wanted to be a role model for her Latinx students, and to expose them to someone who looks like them. In addition,



the commitment to teaching Latinx and other BIPOC students connects with a desire to improve the experiences of these students in public schools. For example, Alma claims that she embraced this idea that her identity, her language, and her purpose as a teacher are so tied together “because of the struggles that I’ve experienced and because of what I want to avoid other people experiencing” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). In addition, when referring particularly to working in TWI programs, Alma wants “to try to change the such American view of being monolingual as the ultimate thing, or change the status quo so that no other little kid ends up thinking Spanish is not good enough” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20).

In her study on critical Xicana/Xicano<sup>12</sup> educators, Berta-Ávila (2004) found that educators need to be critical and conscious of oppressive structures in education, besides sharing a linguistic and cultural background, if they are to be effective in educating students of color. Alma’s experience as a student –of not having the opportunity to learn much about people of color or having to wait until college to learn about that– influenced her beliefs that BIPOC students need to be exposed to “all these narratives that kids can resonate so much with and try to bring the absent narratives . . . all this culturally relevant stuff into the curriculum” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). This belief is informed by her commitment to social justice and equity. Alma wants “kids to see themselves reflected and not just in our specific Latino way but also, you know, learn about the struggles of people from all over the place so that they could have a wider worldview not presented in the regular curriculum” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20).

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<sup>12</sup> I use Xicana/Xicano in this particular example to respect Berta-Ávila’s (2004) study and acknowledge her use of this label. According to her Xicana/Xicano “is a person who has a political, social, and cultural consciousness, which means she or he is a way of the current political, social, and cultural situation of the Xicana/Xicano people” (p. 66). Even if the participants in this study do not identify as Xicana/Xicano, they hold a level of consciousness based on their lived and institutional experience.

In connection to the inclusion of absented narratives into the curriculum, Jacky's has also committed to providing students with the opportunity to learn from the experiences of more people of color, more women, and not just use the White Eurocentric curriculum. She wants to make sure students see different perspectives when they are learning. This resonates with Godina-Martinez, (2010) study of critical Raza educators who are “. . . shattering existing perceptions and re-teaching by undoing the damage that had already convinced many of the Raza students that they were incapable of making their education their own and making it mean something to them” (p. 100). For Alma, TWI education is equitable and “levels the playing field for people who have been disadvantaged” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). Just as Alma sees her role as deeper than mere representation, Jacky also makes connections between her beliefs about education and her decision to work in TWI programs. In particular, Jacky claims that her presence along with her identity can encourage and inspire students in these programs. Jacky is working to “. . . help students break language barriers by speaking two languages” (Journal transcript, 12/12/20).

According to Ruiz, Jiménez-Silva, and Smith (2020), a common finding between undergraduate Latinx students' motivation to enter the teaching profession has been their desire to reverse the negative experiences they faced through the U.S. education system and to provide different educational experiences and opportunities to their future students. Those experiences continue to resonate with current Latinx teachers. As they reflected on their K-12 educational path, these educators described some of the negative experiences they faced growing up and how those experiences influenced not only their decision to teach, but also their beliefs about education. In the following paragraphs, I will connect some of those experiences with the teachers' development of their beliefs about education.

**Witnessing and experiencing a cultural clash between their identities as Latinx and their White teachers influenced the development of these Latinx bilingual teachers' beliefs about education.** As it was explored in chapter 2 and discussed in the finding section above, the lack of a diverse teaching force creates “a potential cultural clash between a predominantly White teaching staff and a student body with high percentages of cultural minorities” (Spring, 2018, p. 175). This is relevant to the study because in Minnesota there is only a 3.5 percent of teachers of color statewide which does not reflect the 30 percent of BIPOC students that attend Minnesota’s public schools (Williams & Ebinger, 2014). There is a correlation between the decision to become teachers and the development of beliefs about education from the participants in this study. Based on their school experiences these four educators understand that the White template that most public schools are based on do not apply nor interest many minoritized students (Hinchey, 2004), so these bilingual Latinx educators decided to “pursue teaching, hoping they will be able to help create schools more attuned to the students who people them” (Hinchey, 2004, p. 34). Noemi was the only Mexican-American in her school, besides her brother, and that lack of diversity and lack of culturally relevant pedagogy, influenced her approach to teaching. She wants her students to learn what is culturally relevant to them and in TWI settings. Noemi feels she can do that for her Latinx youth “because of our similar backgrounds and common languages” (Journal transcript, 1/5/21). Noemi’s beliefs resonate with Carter’s (1970) argument that more than sharing the same racial/ethnic background, students need educators who have “the ability to understand, to accept, empathize with, and constructively cope with individual and cultural diversity (p. 118).

The teaching force is primarily White, female, and monolingual English speaking (Valverde, 2006). In fact, “the vast majority of teachers and administrators are White and speak

English as their native and only language” (García & Wise, 2010, p. 149). One of the implications of this lack of racial and linguistic diversity in education is that “the lens through which students are encouraged to read the world is largely White, monolingual, and middle class” (Haddix, 2017, p. 142). For Alma, the adults in positions of power at her school were White, which was the same experience shared by the rest of the participants. Alma internalized “this idea that I will have to work twice as hard to measure up to my White peers” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). In the case of Armando, he had to change the way he dressed, he spoke, and acted in order for his teachers to try building a relationship with him and to be successful in school. This experience has influenced Armando in acknowledging the importance of building relationships with students regardless of what their background might be, and to understand that students who do not fit into a mold are also worthy of inclusion and investing time to build relationships. Armando claims that “I feel that had I met a teacher who treated me the way I treat my students, I would have become more invested in my education even sooner” (Journal transcript, 12/24/20).

**The pervasiveness of Whiteness and its correlation with success is what these Latinx bilingual educators are fighting against in their practice.** According to Hinchey (2004) the White norms ingrained in education “at every level generate significant barriers that maintain the current racial imbalance in the teaching force. It is these culturally constructed barriers, and not lack of interest, that largely account for the scarcity of non-mainstream teachers” (p. 31). During the study, as participants reflected on their experiences in school settings, they admitted that their idea of success was related to the White gaze because those were the people who held positions of power. According to Kohli (2012) “in our education system, the way a student speaks is often wrongly tied to intelligence, and Standard American English (SAE) is typically valued and

deemed superior” (p. 187). This relates to Armando’s experience in school, where he felt that his way of speaking and his persona needed to change in order for teachers to make an effort to build relationships with him and for him to be successful at school. In particular, Armando remembered his experience in suppressing his Latinx identity in order to succeed. He stated,

I feel like overtime... sadly... to be more successful in school I had to, in a way, suppress my Latino identity and try to conform with being White, as far as... you know, the way that I dressed; as far as the words that I was using; as far as the books; or like the persona that I wanted to give off. I had to be White because in this country White men are what are looked as the ideal or the goal. So, I feel like that's one part of my identity that in a way I had to sacrifice to get to where I am. (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20)

Armando is only in his third-year teaching, so his school experiences are not so far removed from what BIPOC students are currently experiencing. He continues to reflect on those experiences and unpack the impact that those experiences have had on his approach to education. Armando is a proud Latino male who talks about his experience as an undocumented immigrant openly with his students.

Also, taking into consideration the current social and educational climate in the United States, Jackson and Knight-Manuel (2019) claim that “there is a need for educators of color to disrupt the potentially harmful social realities their students of color confront and the impact of those realities on schooling experiences” (p. 65). Armando eventually found an educator in high school which he connected with. Armando’s high school teacher played a significant role in his journey to higher education. Also, Armando believes that “It’s so important for students to feel represented during their education, and also respected and valued, and that’s what I prioritize in my role as an educator” (Journal transcript, 12/24/20).

**There is a commitment from these Latinx bilingual educators to be role models *con ganas*<sup>13</sup> to their Latinx students.** Culturally relevant educators “consciously make use of their experiential knowledge to connect students to both educational content and the social contexts in which they live (Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019, p. 66). The commitment from the participants to be more than only a face that students could relate to demonstrates the idea of being role models *con ganas*. This idea of *con ganas* comes from the Urrieta’s (2007) study on the Chicana/o educators’ activist identity production where there is a strong desire, “perhaps even an urgency, to raise consciousness *pero con ganas*” (p. 137). So, these educators are role models *con ganas* because of their commitment to improve the educational experiences of Latinx and other BIPOC students and to be the teachers they craved for when they were growing up. Dubetz (2014) found that “personal experiences that inform teachers’ advocacy efforts include previous K-12 educational experience, experiences they have had as members of immigrant families and as minorities, and their previous experiences as activists” (p. 12). There is an intentionality to right the wrongs that have negatively impacted the Latinx community for generations from the participants in this study. For example, Noemi’s beliefs about education revolve around equity and finding ways to lessen the education gap in success and attainment and in giving the opportunity to BIPOC students to succeed.

In regards to Latinx students in TWI programs, Noemi wants to “change that frame of reference for students so that they can see their bilingualism in both English and Spanish as really a fantastic gift and . . . really important for identity” (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). Alma also aligns her beliefs about education to her commitment with equity. She chose to work in TWI programs because these programs level the playing field for Latinx families and students.

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<sup>13</sup> In this case “con ganas” would translate to doing something wholeheartedly (with your heart) because of a calling and commitment.

According to Alma, TWI programs adapt the system to fit the needs of Latinx students and families instead of forcing them to assimilate and having them adapt to the system.

The educators in this study possess “strong bicultural identities that gave them a political consciousness and a strong desire to affirm the cultural identities of Latino students” (Bybee, 2014, p. 66). This is what being a role model *con ganas* is about. It is having political consciousness and working towards improving the educational experiences of Latinx bilingual students. For example, Armando claims that he is a vocal advocate for his students, specifically his BIPOC students. In fact, he argues that

I feel like, you know, one day I will be called out and be told hey you're looking out for your students of color more. And I stand by that. Like you're damn right like every other place is not looking out for my students of color. So, you're damn right, I'm going to be the one teacher or the one of the few teachers that's looking out for my students of color. And I feel like you know, it's something definitely that I would be willing to lose my job for if that makes sense. If someone came and said, hey, you're taking favoritism or you're you know, you're giving the kids of color advantage, you're damn, right I am because it's a system where not many other places will do this. And if I am the one teacher, I'm going to be proud of. I'm gonna be proud as heck for it. (Dialogue transcript, 12/7/20)

As Berta-Ávila (2014) succinctly states “it is not enough to be just a teacher of color” (p. 78). Latinx students need “politically conscious [teachers] critically aware of how the centrality of Whiteness in the school context often creates a structure that is dismissive of the social capital that Latina/o students bring to school” (Liou & Rojas, 2016, p. 386). Dubetz (2014) found that in settings, like TWI programs, where teachers shared the minority status of their students, they served as cultural and linguistic models, “making parallels between their own experiences and

those of their students and explicitly teaching students how to negotiate the norms of mainstream society without losing native cultural and linguistic identities” (p. 4). This connects with Arce (2004) argument that “. . . these teachers brought to the classroom their personal histories and experiences as Latinos growing up in a racist, hegemonic society” (Arce, 2004, p. 241). In addition to believing in Latinx student success, these bilingual Latinx teachers accept that their motivation lies in their commitment to “counter the system,” as it was discovered by Godina-Martínez (2010). She found that teachers recognized that “the historic systemic failure of Raza students was proof of [the system’s failure], which is why they were different from others who entered the profession for the ‘love of their subject matter’” (p. 91). The beliefs of education shared by the participants have been influenced by their own experiences as Latinx bilingual students in Minnesota schools. Their goal to be role models *con ganas* demonstrate their commitment to improve the educational experiences of their students. As it will be discussed below, the exposure to courses outside of the education department raised on some of the participants their level of political consciousness, which also influenced their beliefs about education.

**Ethnic and Chicanx studies courses, as well as the opportunity to take classes in other departments during their teacher preparation programs, raised the level of political consciousness of Latinx bilingual educators.**

In their study, Liou and Rojas (2016) gathered information about one Chicano male educator’s disposition and perception of high expectations for his Latinx students and their learning opportunities. The researchers found that institutional memory and this teacher’s politicization as a Chicano male informed his commitment to social justice and his effectiveness as an educator. One of the institutional experiences Liou and Rojas (2016) presented as



influential to this teacher was his ethnic studies college education. According to the researchers “These familial and institutional experiences both gave context to his self-perception as a teacher, but also shaped the ways in which he conceptualized a pedagogy of high expectations through a social justice lens” (p. 390).

Tonatiuh’s experiences and identity (re)formation, in Liou and Rojas’s (2016) study, correlates with the findings in this study and the experiences and identity formation of one of the participants. Alma’s college experience with Chicano and ethnic studies classes informed her identity (re)formation and influenced her beliefs about education and her role in the lives of Latinx students. Just as Tonatiuh, in Liou and Rojas’s (2016) study, through Chicano and ethnic studies courses, Alma learned about educational inequities- “knowledge that led [her] to be self-reflective about both [her] own upbringing and the material conditions facing the young people who live in the community” (p. 392). According to Alma, she embraced the idea that education and language is social justice. She can use both to inspire, change, and advocate for her Latinx students in TWI programs “and level the playing field for people who might not have it that easy, and be able to relate to their experiences” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20).

**Politically conscious educators of color use their lived and institutional experiences to inform their beliefs about education.** This study’s goal is to better understand the experiences of Latinx bilingual teachers in TWI programs in order to diversify the teaching profession. At the same time, in addition to needing more diverse representation of educators, there is an immediate need of critical and conscious educators. As Berta-Ávila (2014) stated in her study “it is not enough to be just a teacher of color” (p. 78). At the same time, according to Godina-Martinez (2010), being conscious is not something that is achieved or that one could “‘arrive to’ and be conscious, it [means] a continual seeking out and working to understand how

and why the systemic inequities that existed marginalized Raza students and students of color” (p. 106). Latinx students need “politically conscious [teachers] critically aware of how the centrality of Whiteness in the school context often creates a structure that is dismissive of the social capital that Latina/o students bring to school” (Liou & Rojas, 2016, p. 386). Furthermore, “the challenge for Chicano students is to help them help the U.S. arrive at a truly multi-racial, multi-ethnic democracy” (García & Wise, 2010, p. 167).

Through the conversations with each of the participants, I noticed a commitment to fight inequities affecting Latinx students throughout. However, the political clarity of the participants and their ability to articulate their political identities and how that impacts their classroom practices varied. Alma was the only participant who shared the impact that Chicano and ethnic studies courses had in dismantling White supremacist views that she had internalized through her K-12 educational experience. According to Alma, “Specifically college just reversed a lot of that but not having access to like ethnic studies classes would have definitely been detrimental for me” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20). Alma’s current beliefs about education revolve around being equitable and something that is beneficial for BIPOC students, who historically have been marginalized by the system. Expósito and Favela (2003) argue that effective teachers who have ideological clarity do not assume that their values and beliefs are superior to those of the families they serve. Educators like Alma, as well as the rest of the participants, embody such ideological clarity by having gone through lived and institutional experiences that other BIPOC students and families have gone through, yet they recognize that everyone’s experience is different.

**Chicanx and Ethnic studies courses help aspiring teachers to raise their level of political consciousness.** According to Haddix (2007) in order to successfully target the decline in enrollment in teacher preparation programs and the lack of teacher diversity there needs to be

a “real consideration for the potential of a racially and linguistically diverse teacher force to transform schools and communities” (p. 143). By collaborating with ethnic studies and Chicana studies departments, departments of education can better prepare educators, BIPOC and White, to work with diverse populations. In fact, according to Liou and Rojas (2016) “Teacher preparation programs need to emphasize the importance of equity, diversity, and excellence, as well as a coherent curriculum that fosters teachers’ critical consciousness and responsibilities to act” (p. 399). In the case of Alma, this is what she had to say about the impact that Chicana and ethnic studies had on her development as a teacher and in dismantling internalized White supremacist views that undermined her identity as Latina and bilingual.

I went to college and I started doing all the intro to Chicano studies and I was suddenly exposed to all this history of Latinos in the U.S. Like there's this whole another set of identity and history and culture that I have never known about, and just like it almost awakened that idea of language and social justice just brought together. It was just this new found glory I guess for my own identity and language because it was suddenly this spark of like, oh my God, like she's [her mother] been saying this she's been right all along. And you start learning about language suppression. And you start learning about the Chicano movement and people walking out of schools because they wanted, you know, all these things. All these struggles that connected and linked me, a kid in 2009-2010, all the way back to these people in like the 60s that are still talking about the same thing. Which is meaningful and even though I wouldn't consider myself Chicana because obviously I am not Mexican-American but like there was also a lot of solidarity within that that added to that same idea of the struggle within the United States and the struggle

of the language, the struggle of the culture that really resonated with me and my identity.

(Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20)

This experience influenced Alma in such a way that she made it a priority to teach her Latinx students and other BIPOC students parts of their history so that they did not have to wait until they got to college to be exposed to this rich history and culture. This resonated with Urrieta's (2007) finding that the participants in his study reported that "they developed an incredible desire to learn their own history, that many felt had been denied to them during their K-12 experiences" (p. 131). Just as Liou and Rojas' (2016); Reyes McGovern (2013); and Urrieta (2007); among others; studies had implications for teacher education. For "teacher education programs with social justice goals must require pre-service teachers to take Ethnic Studies classes to complement teacher education coursework" (Reyes McGovern, 2013, p. 47).

**Spanish departments make Latinx bilingual aspiring teachers feel seen and connected; through classes and projects help raise the political consciousness of these future educators.** In addition to the positive impact that courses in Chicano and ethnic studies had on the development of teachers' beliefs about education, another finding from this study was the need for collaboration with the Spanish department for teachers interested in TWI programs. For example, it was voiced by the participants that they were one of the few Latinx bilinguals in their teacher preparation program. This created a disconnect between their experiences with the professors or classmates in these programs. In the case of Noemi, she was able to feel connected and encouraged as a student of color in the Spanish department at her university.

Noemi found a connection with the Spanish department, "so when [she] was taking courses there, [she] would research these topics that combined her interests in education and in language, so bilingual education was a quick connection there. And my professors were

encouraging; they liked to see me interested in that and would encourage me in that area to develop that understanding” (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). Noemi’s identity as a bilingual woman living in a bilingual world, shaped her beliefs about education and influenced her desire to be a teacher and advocate for Latinx students who have been historically marginalized.

**By taking courses in Chicana and Ethnic studies, Latinx bilingual educators are committed to carving a different path for Latinx students in two-way immersion programs.**

As I conversed with the participants and learned about the development of their beliefs about education and learning how influential courses in Chicano and ethnic studies -as well as the connection with professors in the Spanish department- I noticed that there is a common understanding and commitment to providing different educational experiences for Latinx students. Just as Berta-Ávila (2003) wrote in her study “What is most important to remember, however, is that the process of conscientization is slowly emerging in Xicana/Xicano communities across the country. That this is occurring gives us hope that el movimiento is alive” (p. 127). Through courses in Chicano and ethnic studies, in addition to the pedagogical courses in the education departments, “future educators of urban students can too learn to not just teach, but to raise consciousness, not just by teaching for social justice, but teaching for social justice *pero con ganas*” (Urrieta, 2007, p. 138).

### Summary

In order to understand the experiences of these participants and the impact that those experiences had on their decision to work in TWI programs, as well as the development of their beliefs about education, this Chapter started with a contextualization of those experiences by sharing individual case narratives for each of the participants: Alma, Armando, Noemi and Jacky. Besides my personal commitment to honoring the stories of the participants in this study,

as it was explained in Chapter 3 under counter-storytelling, this Chapter presented the narratives –drafted from the conversations and insights shared by the participants in their journals– as a way to contextualize the findings of this dissertation that addressed the research questions. My goal with these counterstories (Yosso, 2006), was to bring Latinx bilingual listeners together (Delgado, 2011), with the goal to improve the schooling experiences of future Latinxs in this country (Ochoa, 2007).

Further in the Chapter, I explored five major findings, three related to research question one and two related to research question two. Yosso (2005) argues that “data cannot ‘speak’ without interpretation” (p. 11). The cultural intuition I bring to this work as an immigrant, first generation college student, former ELL student and TWI educator, informed my approach to this study.

As participants reflected on their experiences and how those experiences influenced their beliefs about education, there was a clear intentionality to act as “change agents in the classroom. They view this as one way to counter the oppressive practices experienced by Raza students” (Berta-Ávila, 2004, p. 77). At the same time, their decision to work in TWI programs connects with this purpose of countering the system by working in settings where the system is adapting to the linguistic needs of Latinx families instead of having Latinx families and students assimilate and adapt to a monolingual system. There is a commitment to fight inequities historically affecting the Latinx community in this country.

### **Preview of Chapter Five**

In this chapter I presented the narratives of the Latinx bilingual educators who participated in this study which served to contextualize the findings described in the major

findings section. Three major findings for research question 1 and two for research question 2 were presented in this chapter.

In the next chapter, I will present a summary of the major findings which reiterate the reasons Latinx bilingual teachers chose to work in two-way immersion programs as well as the influence that their lived experiences and institutional experiences influenced the development of their beliefs about education. Following the summary of findings, the participants' beliefs about education and their journeys to TWI programs and the connection between their experiences living as bilinguals in a monolingual society is also explored. Then, the recommendations based on the lessons learned from the findings of this study are presented. The study limitations and recommendations for future research is also discussed. Finally, I conclude with a final reflection on the entire study.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This proliferation of counterstories is not an accident or coincidence. Oppressed groups have known instinctively that stories are an essential tool to their own survival and liberation . . . So, stories -stories about oppression, about victimization, about one's own brutalization- far from deepening the despair of the oppressed, lead to healing, liberation, mental health. They also promote group solidarity. Storytelling emboldens the hearer, who may have had the same thoughts and experiences the storyteller describes, but hesitated to give them voice.

Having heard another express them, he or she realizes, I am not alone.

Delgado, 2011, pp. 238-239

The purpose of this critical qualitative study was to examine how the lived experiences of Latinx bilingual teachers influenced their path to TWI programs and informed the development of their beliefs about education. It relied on the experiences shared by these educators to construct counterstories that illustrated the current experiences of Latinx in this country. Just as Delgado (2011) states in the epigraph that opens this Chapter, stories about oppression lead to healing and promote group solidarity. Listening to stories –Delgado (2011) maintains– “makes the adjustment to further stories easier [because] one acquires the ability to see the world through others' eyes” (p. 239). These dynamics can lead the way –continues Delgado (2011)– “to new environments” (p. 239).

Constructing these counterstories entails building a knowledge foundation to understand and connect with the experiences shared by the storytellers. In the case of this study, I provided a historical context of the Latinx experience (Chapter 2) and linked it to the current experiences of



Latinxs in education (Chapter 4). The focus of those two Chapters was to look critically at the impact that a racialized society has on minoritized communities (Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 2017). Thus, this research was designed as a qualitative multiple case study, in which multiple sources of information (Carspecken, 1996) such as surveys, dialogues, and journals were involved. Two research questions guided this project and they are:

- (1) How are Latinx dual language teachers' lived experiences connected with their decisions to work in two-way immersion programs?
- (2) How are Latinx dual language teachers' lived experiences connected with their beliefs about education?

As our Latinx student population continues to grow nationwide (Crosnoe, 2006; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Garcia, 2001; Howard, Sugarman, & Christian, 2003; Valencia, 2010a; Valencia, 2010b; Valverde, 2006)), the United States cannot afford to neglect the needs of these students, who are the future of this country, as well as the dire need for the diversification of our teaching staff (Valencia, 2010b).

The Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework used in this study validated and centered the experiences of these educators through the use of counterstories (Delgado, 2011; Yosso, 2005; Yosso, 2006). In addition, the LatCrit framework influenced this project in the acknowledgement and connections made between race, language, and identity within the Latinx experience in the United States (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). As a community that has been historically marginalized, “those injured by racism and other forms of oppression discover that they are not alone and moreover are part of a legacy of resistance to racism and the layers of racialized oppression” (Yosso, 2005, p. 75). With this research, my goal was for Latinx bilingual teachers,

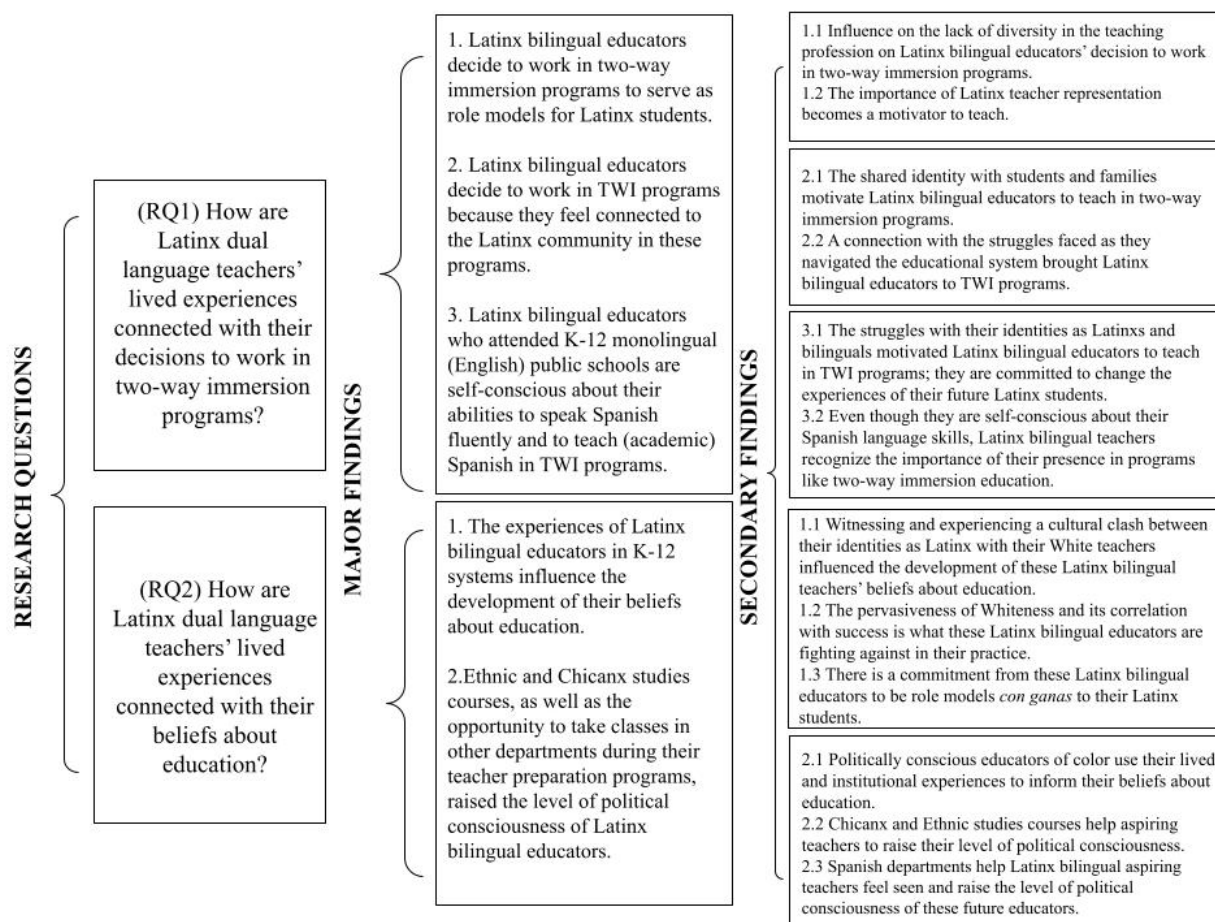
who have experienced institutional racism to feel empowered by hearing the stories that relate to their own experiences and for aspiring Latinx bilingual educators to be inspired to continue on their path towards TWI education.

### Summary of Major Findings

The findings of this study provided an understanding on how the experiences of Latinx bilingual teachers influenced their journeys to TWI education. In addition, these Latinx bilingual teachers reflected on the development of their beliefs about education. Figure 9 illustrates the major findings described in Chapter 4 in connection with each of the two research questions.

**Figure 10**

*Major Findings and Secondary Findings from Study*



**Research Question #1: How are Latinx dual language teachers' lived experiences connected with their decisions to work in two-way immersion programs?**

As explained in Chapter 4, one of the major reasons Latinx bilinguals decide to become teachers is based on their experiences as students in the K-12 education system and the lack of diversity. Two-way immersion (TWI) education was not the first goal for these educators. For most of them, the first time they heard about the possibility of teaching in a TWI program was while they were searching for places to complete their practicums. However, it must be said that there was already a desire within the participants to put to good use their experiences in order to help people. This is what brought them to teaching in the first place. Their decision to work in a TWI program was influenced by their desire to change the de facto American monolingual model as the ultimate goal for students in the United States. At the same time, these educators wanted to work with Latinx youth in order to have a positive impact in their educational success and attainment. They wanted their students to experience having a Latinx teacher, which was something they never experienced in school growing up themselves. Even if TWI education was not the first choice for many of the participants, these teachers recognized the importance of having educators who reflect the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the student population.

A second major finding detailed in Chapter 4 was the way in which the connection between these educators and the Latinx community influenced their decision to work in TWI programs. The experience of being raised bilingual and coming from immigrant parents, or being immigrants themselves, have influenced the educational journey and the identity formation of each participant. In addition to sharing similar race/ethnic backgrounds with their students, these Latinx bilingual educators also share similar experiences with language identity and immigrant experiences. Being able to relate to families and students has been very meaningful for the

participants in this study and a reaffirmation that they made the right choice in deciding to work in TWI programs.

Besides connections made along ethnic identity and language, the participants also share the immigrant experience with the Latinx families and students in these programs. Two of the participants were born in another country and moved at a young age. These two participants were also undocumented and had to face another set of challenges that influenced their decision to teach and how they approach teaching Latinx students. The other two participants were born in Minnesota, but had the experience of being raised by immigrant parents which also shaped their identity and their ability to connect with families going through the same experiences.

The final major finding related to research question 1 described in Chapter 4 was the fact that Latinx bilinguals who have attended English-only K-12 systems in this country hold negative views of their Spanish language skills. This is significant because even if Latinx bilinguals raised in this country decide to become educators, they do not necessarily choose to work in TWI programs because they do not feel confident enough to teach academic Spanish. The participants of this study also shared similar self-doubts about their linguistic competence to teach academic language to their students in TWI programs, which reflects the hegemony of English that has forced these participants, which is a shared experience with other Latinxs, to be in a position where they have been unable to develop their language. This also brings to question the idea of who is supported to be bilingual/biliterate and who is not.

The critical reflection that these participants shared about their negotiation between language and identity when growing up makes them ideal role models for bilingual Latinx students who also happen to be facing the same struggles between language and identity in public schools. As it was mentioned before, by Gándara and Contreras (2009), training on

pedagogical skills is an easier task, but having gone through the experiences of being bilingual and Latinx in Minnesota is not something that can be learned in a classroom. The educators in this study use not only their languages, but also their experiences to connect and advocate for their students and families.

**Research Question #2: How are Latinx dual language teachers' lived experiences connected with their beliefs about education?**

One of the two major findings related in Chapter 4—that addressed research question 2— was the influence that Latinx bilingual educators' experiences in K-12 systems had on the development of their beliefs about education. During the conversations with the participants and in their journal reflections, there was this clear notion among the participants that Latinx educational paths are full of obstacles and they are the exception rather than the rule, which is what brought them to teaching and has influenced their beliefs about education. This particular point relates to Corbado's (2011) rejection of the notion that there is a linear uplift and improvement of racial progress in the United States. As we have seen, many of our Latinx students are pushed out along the way.

These participants shared a commitment to be more than only a face that students could relate to, which resonates with the idea of being role models *con ganas*. This concept of *con ganas* comes from the Urrieta's (2007) study on the Chicana/o educators' activist identity production where he identifies a strong desire, "perhaps even an urgency, to raise consciousness *pero con ganas*" (p. 137). So, these educators are role models *con ganas* because of their commitment to improve the educational experiences of Latinx and other BIPOC students and to be the teachers they craved for when they were growing up.

The bilingual Latinx educators in this study take their role in the classroom as more than only a face that students can relate to, but their decision to teach and their beliefs about education revolve around a commitment to improve the educational experiences of Latinx students, which show a desire to actualize the role model *con ganas* in their practice. These educators are incorporating absented narratives into their practice; they are being intentional in creating spaces where students of color feel safe and connected before learning can occur; and they are questioning and pushing back on unequitable practices that negatively impacts Latinx students and other students of color. The beliefs of education shared by the participants have been influenced by their own experiences as Latinx bilingual students in Minnesota schools. Their goal to be role models *con ganas* demonstrate their commitment to improve the educational experiences of their Latinx students.

The second major finding explored in Chapter 4 was the impact that classes taken on Chicano and Ethnic studies departments—as well as courses taken in the Spanish departments—had on raising the level of political consciousness of Latinx bilingual educators. Through the conversations with each of the participants, I noticed a shared commitment to fight inequities affecting Latinx students. However, the political clarity of the participants and their ability to articulate their political identities and how this impacts their classroom practices varied. Alma was the only participant who shared the impact that Chicano and Ethnic studies courses had in dismantling White supremacist views that she had internalized through her K-12 educational experience. In addition, Noemi's connection with the Spanish department made her feel seen and encouraged to research topics on bilingual education and Latinx educational attainment. Noemi's identity as a bilingual woman living in a bilingual world, shaped her beliefs about education and

influenced her desire to be a teacher and advocate for Latinx students who have been historically marginalized.

In sum, through courses in Chicano and Ethnic studies, in addition to the pedagogical courses in the education departments —and in the case of Noemi, the Spanish department—, “future educators of urban students can too learn to not just teach, but to raise consciousness, not just by teaching for social justice, but teaching for social justice *pero con ganas*” (Urrieta, 2007, p. 138).

### Discussion

**The participants’ beliefs about education and their journeys to TWI programs are informed by their bilingual identity in a society with monolingual ideals.**

Just as Anzaldúa (1987) stated in her book, “I am my language” (p. 81). In my case, I take pride in who I am as a bilingual in this country. Language has been a crucial aspect of who I am; becoming bilingual has been a transformative experience. Throughout this research, I understood the influence that being bilingual had on these particular educators. Even when they experienced language suppression, felt the need to reject their Latinx identity, and learned English as fast as possible in order to be successful, they all maintained their Spanish language alive. The experiences presented in this study are of people who live bilingually and believe in the importance of language maintenance and development. This is what brought them to TWI programs.

In order to create more favorable educational circumstances for language-minority children —Moll (2001) maintains—, their institutional experiences need to be contextualized and addressed using a critical-historical perspective. As we have read in Chapter 2, historical events have impacted teaching and learning in this country for many years (Moll, 2001). In Minnesota,

where this study was conducted, 66.3% of Latinx students graduated from high school in 2017 (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018). The participants in this study have made it through the path, have beat the odds, and broke off of the “cycle of educational failure” (Bybee, 2014) and they have decided to give back to their communities by becoming allies, advocates, and role models for students with similar backgrounds.

When asked how their schooling experiences influenced their decision to teach in TWI programs, the participants shared positive experiences with specific teachers as the first realization that teaching was something they wanted to achieve. The biggest impact that these teachers had on these four Latinx educators was more related to how they made them feel than the academics taught to them. One of the teachers spoke Spanish and this was crucial for Alma as she navigated the education system as a new EL student and the connection her mother was able to establish with this teacher because of the language connection was invaluable. After this experience, Alma realized the potential of what she could do in education, who she could be, and what she could be for families and students. In the case of Armando, it was until he met one teacher in high school that he stopped feeling lost and started to feel connected. The biggest influence his high school teacher had on Armando was the way this teacher helped Armando navigate school and find a path that worked for him. This was particularly important for Armando because he was the first one in his family to walk this path and he had no one to turn to to ask for support.

The development of beliefs about education within each of the participants in this study connects with their decision to work in TWI programs, as a way to take a stand against the assimilationist and monolingual approach to education. This relates with Bartolomé and Balderrama’s (2001) study in which they found participants that shared “their rejection of deficit



views of Mexicano/Latino students and their refusal to assume assimilationist views in educating these students” (p. 57). When asked to reflect on how their self-identity influenced their beliefs about education, the overarching theme that came up from the conversations was the need for students to see themselves represented and connected. In particular, these educators acknowledge the impact that their experiences as bilinguals and Latinx in this country would have in making connections with the experiences of their Latinx students. As stated by Armando,

I would emphasize that for many students, I represent someone in education who looks like them or shares a similar story - something that I didn't really have growing up - and representation alone, having a good example to look up to, can be powerful. (Dialogue transcript, 12/24/20)

There was an acknowledgement of the work that needs to be done in order for Latinx experiences to be represented in schools that these educators see themselves as breaking barriers for future generations of Latinx students. And that also informs these teachers' beliefs about education, the acknowledgment of the educational system's imperfection and their commitment to, like Alma states, “to shape it and make it so that it benefits your people or benefits people who have been marginalized” (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/20).

The experiences as Latinx in this country have influenced how these educators think about education. For example, Armando stated that for him being Latino and coming from that group had instilled the importance in building community and a safe space for his students. Making connections was also part of these educators' philosophy of education where they used their Latinx identity to connect with students in their classrooms. These teachers' beliefs about education come from a place of experiencing the impact that a Latinx teacher standing in front of a classroom speaking in Spanish has on Latinx students who otherwise would not feel connected.

For instance, Noemi shared an experience that made her realize the power that being Latinx has in the classroom. When she introduced herself to a group of kindergarteners, she used Spanish first to introduce herself. A little girl's "eyes just opened up wide and she looked at me and it was the first time that I found out later that she had made a connection in that classroom all year" (Dialogue transcript, 12/10/20). All four teachers made connections between their identities as bilingual, Latinx, immigrant (regardless if they were born in the U.S. or not) as influential in their development of their beliefs about education.

Just as self-identity, their school experiences also influenced the beliefs about education of the participants. Something that stood out from the dialogues with these educators and their journal reflections was the lack of role models and representation going through the education system in Minnesota. There were some experiences that reinforced the identity of these Latinx educators, i.e. a teacher who spoke Spanish, a teacher who never gave up on making a connection, a teacher who incorporated Latinx culture into the classroom, and teachers who valued them for who they were. Those experiences got these educators interested in becoming teachers. However, there were many instances where these educators' identities were undermined by the education system and by educators as well that influenced their beliefs about education and instilled in these educators a desire to fight against educational inequities. For example, Alma claims that,

For me . . . it ended up becoming this idea of my identity and my language and my purpose as a teacher are just so tied together because of the struggles that I've experienced and because of what I want to avoid other people experiencing and because I want to be an ally and push people forward and also to try to change the such American view of being monolingual is the ultimate thing, you know, or it's just the status quo and

so that no other little kids end up thinking that Spanish is not good enough. (Dialogue transcript, 12/16/21)

This is a sentiment that is shared by the other participants in how their own schooling experiences influenced their beliefs about education. These educators wanted to make sure they were those teachers who pushed, connected, and listened to their Latinx students, something that was missing in their education. Also, they wanted to make sure that the history of BIPOC students was presented early in education and not wait until college to expose students to the history and experiences of BIPOC people in this country.

### **Recommendations**

The lessons learned from the findings of this study have implications for different aspects and stakeholders within education. The first recommendation is for stakeholders committed to diversifying the teaching profession in Minnesota.

#### **Policymakers**

**Recommendation 1: Policymakers can continue to collaborate with The Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota (TOCAIT) and join the effort to diversify the teaching profession in Minnesota. There is a need for Role Models *con ganas* in TWI programs.**

The diversity of the student population in public schools, with 30 percent Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) children (Williams & Ebinger, 2014), is not reflected in the teaching population in the state of Minnesota, where “only four percent of teachers identify as people of color or American Indian [and] . . . where [t]his percentage has remained stagnant for decades” (Fetzer, Griffin, Leonard, & Thomas, 2018, p. 3). According to Ochoa (2007), there is research that suggests that teachers of color have high expectations for students

with whom they share the same racial/ethnic background. In addition to sharing similar race/ethnic backgrounds with their students, these Latinx bilingual educators also share similar experiences with language identity and immigrant experiences. Being able to relate to families and students has been very meaningful for the participants in this study and a reaffirmation that they made the right decision in deciding to work in TWI programs.

Ek, Sánchez, and Quijada (2013) argue that Latinx teachers often serve as role models to marginalized students who have a preference for teachers who share their ethnic identity and bilingualism. In the two biggest school districts in the state, Minneapolis and Saint Paul Public Schools, “64 and 76 percent of these districts’ respective students are children of color while only 14 and 16 percent of the teaching force is composed of people of color” (Williams & Ebinger, 2014, p. 6). There are groups advocating for the diversification of the teaching profession in order to better meet the needs of the students in the state. For example, the Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota (TOCAIT) was established in 2015 and has worked to pass legislation related to increasing Teaching of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota (TOCAIT Website). This work is pertinent and crucial because studies show that understanding the culture of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students makes a difference (Téllez, 1999). Furthermore, the underrepresentation of Latinx teachers is a “national phenomenon that stems from historical and institutional factors that continue to skew who has access to critical thinking courses, higher-level learning, college attendance, and careers in teaching” (Ochoa, 2007, p. 7). Latinx teachers can serve as role models for Latinx students, deliver bilingual education, and help promote racial/ethnic understanding and respect among all students (Arce, 2004; Ruiz, Jiménez-Silva, & Smith, 2020; Valencia, 2010a).

As it was mentioned before, by Gándara and Contreras (2009), training on pedagogical skills is an easier task, but having gone through the experiences of being bilingual and Latinx in Minnesota is not something that can be learned from a book. The educators in this study use not only their languages, but also their experiences to connect and advocate for their students and families. Just as it was discussed above, there is a need to diversify the teaching profession and recruit teachers from “the students’ own communities. So, the presence and critical commitment of these role models *con ganas* reinforce the argument of needing “homegrown” educators from the communities these students in TWI programs come from in order to provide different school experiences for them (Dee, 2005; Kohli, 2012; Reyes McGovern, 2013; Urrieta, 2007).

### **Teacher Preparation Programs**

**Recommendation 2: In response to the findings in this study, teacher preparation programs can collaborate with Ethnic studies and Chicax studies—as well as other departments like the Spanish department—to increase the level of political consciousness in aspiring teachers.**

This recommendation connects with the sense of isolation felt by bilingual Latinx aspiring teachers in their teaching preparation programs and the need to decenter Whiteness in their preparation programs. In the case of one of the participants in this study, she was one of three Latinx students which made her feel disconnected. Courses in Ethnic and Chicax studies are not only beneficial for Latinx bilingual aspiring teachers, any aspiring educator who will be working with BIPOC students can benefit from taking courses in these departments (Urrieta, 2007). For Latinx bilingual aspiring teachers in particular, courses in Ethnic and Chicano studies can, like in Liou and Rojas’s (2016) study, can help them develop a new critical consciousness

which will serve to question and dismantle negative internalized ideas in regards to the color of their skin, their Latinx identity, and the use of Spanish in public settings.

Latinx and other BIPOC students need “politically conscious [teachers] critically aware of how the centrality of Whiteness in the school context often creates a structure that is dismissive of the social capital that Latina/o students bring to school” (Liou & Rojas, 2016, p. 386). As stated by one of the participants, the allure of whiteness is real and something that can blind even BIPOC who can pass as white. Alma’s experience with these courses informed her beliefs about education and she admitted that not having access to Ethnic studies classes would have definitely been detrimental for her. Just as Urrieta (2007) classes that are important for Chicana/o Activist self-making expose students to epistemological diversity. In fact, “Topics that made an impact for participants in these courses dealt with the historical presence of Chicanas/os, Latinas/os in the U.S. and the history of Latin America, as well as current issues in the Chicana/o, Latina/o community” (p. 124). The courses in Chicano and Ethnic studies instilled in Alma a commitment to be a role model *con ganas*. She continues to work in dismantling White supremacist views that she had internalized growing up. In doing so, she is providing her students with a different educational experience that she had. This is the power of these courses. They raise the level of political consciousness by exposing students to epistemological diversity and historical context to the educational attainment of BIPOC students in this country.

As teachers interested in TWI programs, the connection between their interest and the Spanish department also provided the opportunity to gain language confidence at the same time that it provided opportunities for research on topics related to bilingual education, bilingual identity, and educational attainment of Latinx students in the United States. That was Noemi’s experience. After feeling disconnected with the education department, but knowing she wanted

to become a teacher, the Spanish department became that safe place where she was able to feel seen, connected, and celebrated for her bilingual Mexican American identity. Aspiring Latinx bilingual educators, educated in K-12 monolingual programs, can benefit from taking classes in Spanish departments to minimize their self-consciousness of their Spanish language skills. It is my belief, based on the conversations with the participants, that the personal and educational experiences that Latinx bilingual educators went through and their commitment to counter the system outweighs the potential lack of Spanish language fluency. Yet, courses in Spanish could boost the confidence of these aspiring TWI educators<sup>14</sup>.

### **School districts and administrators**

**Recommendation 3: In order to move teachers forward in the critical and political consciousness continuum, districts need to provide professional development opportunities for their current teaching staff.**

According to Godina-Martinez (2010), being conscious is not something that is achieved or that one could “‘arrive to’ and be conscious, it [means] a continual seeking out and working to understand how and why the systemic inequities that existed marginalized Raza students and students of color” (p. 106). Latinx students need “politically conscious [teachers] critically aware of how the centrality of Whiteness in the school context often creates a structure that is dismissive of the social capital that Latina/o students bring to school”(Liou & Rojas, 2016, p. 386). Furthermore, “the challenge for Chicano students is to help them help the U.S. arrive at a truly multi-racial, multi-ethnic democracy” (García & Wise, 2010, p. 167).

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<sup>14</sup> In the last decades, there is an increasing trend within American universities located in areas, where Latinx populations make a significant part of the student body, to offer a linguistic curriculum in Spanish targeting Heritage Speakers of Spanish.

District-wide professional development efforts have not kept pace with the diversification of the student population (Izarry & Raible, 2011). There is a need to rethink professional development and shift to include issues other than just curriculum and pedagogy by encouraging teachers to “view teaching as intellectual work, to learn about their students’ identities and lives, and to be intellectually curious and questioning (Nieto, 2005, p. 40). As it was demonstrated in this study, Latinx bilingual teachers have been “infected with deficit and linguistic views of their minority students and must consciously resist internalizing and acting on these negative ideologies” (Alfaro & Bartolome, 2017, p. 12). Through job-embedded professional development opportunities, these issues can be addressed with educators in order to have them develop “ideological clarity that will enable them to interrogate their own deficit views of low-SES emergent bilinguals, and of the nonstandard languages they bring to the classroom” (Alfaro & Bartolome, 2017, pp. 11-12).

### **Practicing teachers in two-way immersion programs**

**Recommendation 4: In order to improve the experiences of Latinx and other students of color in the classrooms, educators must identify areas of growth focused on Culturally Responsive and Competent Teaching domains and be observed, receive feedback and reflect on their goals.**

As we have learned from this study, the teachers that had the biggest impact on these educators were the teachers who made an effort to connect with them when they were students. Beyond the subject matter, what these teachers remember is how their teachers made them feel and how that influenced their decision to become a teacher as well as how they think about education. For Alma, it was that teacher who spoke the same language that made her feel connected. For Armando, it was his high school teacher with whom he found someone to



connect for the first time. Noemi witnessed the instant connection between her and a student because of the language Noemi used. Finally, Jacky talked about the genuine connection she felt with her teachers. As educators, it is important to recognize and be cognizant of the impact that our interactions have on students' self-esteem and sense of belonging, which impacts their educational journey.

By incorporating a systemic approach to getting current teachers to reflect on their practice will improve the interactions with students and will make teachers aware of those interactions by receiving feedback as well when they get observed.

**Recommendation 5: Encourage educators to work with administrators, mentors, and colleagues to grow on their culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices.**

It is not the goal of this dissertation to claim that White educators cannot teach students of color. In my opinion, any teacher can teach any student. However, it is also the goal of this study to acknowledge the role that culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices have on BIPOC students educational experiences. By collaborating with different stakeholders (i.e., mentors, colleagues, and administrators), teachers can observe one another, reflect on their instruction, and modify lessons to make them more inclusive and effective. This is about creating a culture of collaboration and willingness to grow as an educator; regardless of racial background, but with a commitment to engage in anti-racist work.

### **Study Limitations**

The goal of a cumulative multiple case study is not generalization. Each Latinx bilingual teacher's experience is independent of the other and should be treated as such. It is important to remember that commonalities in this study are isolated to these four research subjects. There were two primary limitations to this study.

One of the limitations is the way the dialogues were conducted. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the dialogues were conducted via zoom. This could have potentially impacted the human connection and my ability to read non-verbal cues or body language that an in-person dialogue could have facilitated. At the same time, participants stayed for longer than the time allocated for the interview and they commented feeling great after reflecting on their lived experiences and on their journeys to TWI education.

A second limitation was the COVID-19 pandemic itself. This was felt mostly on my ability to find more participants to interview. When I asked the participants in this study why they thought the number of people wanting to have a dialogue with me was low, they attributed it to the fact that teachers are currently under a lot of stress and probably could not commit their time to a study. This makes me wonder about the numbers of participants during a more “normal” year.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Latinx bilingual educators’ stories need to be heard. By conducting this study, I also identified other areas that could be researched, which to me, would complement the research conducted in this dissertation.

First, as teachers reflected on their beliefs about education and how they were influenced by their lived experiences, it would be worthwhile to also conduct observations of teachers teaching and interacting with their students in order to make further connections between beliefs about education and teaching practice.

Second, this study focused exclusively on Latinx bilingual educators who have had — fully or partially— experienced K-12 education in the United States. When I was selecting participants for this study, I realized that there are many Latinxs educators who migrated from

Latin America as adults and who are currently teaching in TWI programs in Minnesota. A similar study to the one conducted for this dissertation could be conducted with the main focus being those educators who moved from Latin American countries. In particular, the focus would be on their reasons for teaching in these programs and also to investigate their linguistic ideologies and how they negotiate with different Spanish speaking students and students who are raised bilingual in this country who speak non-standard varieties of Spanish language.

Third, on the same realm of linguistic ideologies, this study would benefit from individual conversations, as well as a group discussion, with the same participants in this study on this topic of language to discuss topics related to bilingual education in the United States, translanguaging, code-switching, and Spanglish.

Lastly, two-way immersion school administrators are also a group that I find particularly interesting in researching. A multiple case study that investigates the ways these administrators became involved in TWI education and how they see their role in the ways these programs are implemented would be fascinating. My interest is getting at the “why” people do what they do and how “their why” connects with their actual practices. So, having administrators reflect on this could further improve the ways in which TWI programs are implemented in Minnesota.

### **Final Thoughts**

This study was a response to the limited amount of research that investigates the journeys of Latinx bilingual educators to TWI programs as well as the development of their beliefs about education. There are studies on the life and institutional experiences of Latinx educators (Bybee, 2014; Ek, Sánchez, & Quijada Cerecer, 2013; Flores, Clark, Guerra, & Sánchez, 2008; Guyton, Saxton, & Wesche, 1996; Liou & Rojas, 2016; Ochoa, 2007; Reyes McGovern, 2013; Téllez, 1999); on the decision of teachers of color to teach in urban schools (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011;

Godina-Martínez, 2010; Irizarry & Raible, 2011); on the development of their beliefs about education (Berta-Ávila, 2003; Ek, Sánchez, & Quijada Cerecer, 2013; Liou & Rojas, 2016); and on the development of critical educators (Bartolomé & Balderrama, 2001; Berta-Ávila, 2003; Godina-Martínez, 2010; Jackson & Knight-Manuel, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Liou & Rojas, 2016; Reyes McGovern, 2013; Urrieta; 2007), but there is a gap in the research on the path of Latinx bilingual educators to TWI programs.

In her study, Ochoa (2007) argued that when we listen to the stories of Latinx teachers, “we understand multiple patterns that past and present students encounter, learn how these teachers were able to achieve their educational aspirations, observe how they are drawing on their schooling experiences to teach today's children” (p. 110). Influenced by Ochoa’s (2007) study, it is also my hope that these Latinx bilingual teachers’ lessons can be used to improve the experiences of Latinxs in education.

My experience as a first-generation college student and my journey to TWI education reminded me of the following verses from Andalusian poet Antonio Machado, *Caminante, no hay camino/se hace el camino al andar* (“Wayfarer, there is no path/the path is made by walking”). In that same poem, Machado writes *Al andar se hace camino, y al volver la vista atrás se ve la senda que nunca se ha de volver a pisar* (“As you walk, you make your own road, and when you look back you see the path you will never travel again”). The path does not end with me. Just as Solorzano and Yosso (2001), “we are part of a legacy, a chain. We also need to keep the path open for those who will come after us” (p. 487).

It was my goal to bring forward the experiences of Latinxs who, like me, have struggled to find their way to the gratifying teaching profession and to empower aspiring bilingual Latinx travel the path. By conducting this study, I realized that these educators also were committed to

spearhead or carve a path for Latinx students so that they did not have to struggle like they did. It was inspiring to witness the level of consciousness and the acknowledgement that even as they made it through the educational path, many other Latinxs did not make it. There is a clear notion among the participants of this study that Latinxs educational paths are full of obstacles and they are the exception rather than the rule, which is what brought them to teaching and has influenced their beliefs about education.

Just as Jacky's and Noemi's parents, going to college was an expectation from my parents. Just like Armando's parents, my parents pushed me to graduate from high school even when they did not have the same opportunity growing up and did not know how to navigate the system. And, just as Alma's determination to continue on her path, her calling to spearhead for future generations is what also motivated me to continue my education and arrive at this point of my journey where I am earning this degree. I know my journey is not over; in fact, it is just starting. I know I have work to do. I will continue to learn and work for my community. I will work in recruiting and retaining future Latinx educators to TWI programs, who are so desperately needed.

As I look back to the path I will never walk again, I want to make sure I am carving a path for future generations of Latinx educators who are committed to serving our community.

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**APPENDICES****Appendix A: Survey Questions**

Survey Questionnaire: Dual language educators in Minnesota

1. Are you a Dual Language Educator?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
2. What is your first language? (If you have various first languages, please, go ahead and select more than one)
  - a. Spanish
  - b. English
  - c. Other (please specify)
3. What other languages do you speak?
  - a. Spanish
  - b. English
  - c. Other(s)
4. Did you attend school in the US?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. Select the grades you attended schools in the US:
  - a. K-3
  - b. 4-6
  - c. 7-8
  - d. 9-12
  - e. Other (please specify)
6. Where did you experience most of your teacher training?
  - a. US
  - b. Other (please specify)
7. What grade level do you teach/work with?
  - a. Elementary (Please specify)
  - b. Middle School (Please specify)
  - c. High School (Please specify)
8. Number of years teaching in a Dual Language program?
  - a. Less than 1 year
  - b. 1-2 years
  - c. 2-3 years
  - d. 3-5 years
  - e. More than 5 years
9. What is the highest degree you have earned?
  - a. Bachelors

- b. Masters
  - c. Doctorate
  - d. Other(s)
10. Do you teach in a
- a. Dual Language One-way Immersion Program (most students share the same home language)
  - b. Dual Language Two-way Immersion Program (about 50% of students speak English as first language, and the other 50% of students speak a language other than English at home (e.g. Spanish))
  - c. Different program (Please specify)
11. What is your current position?
- a. Dual Language Classroom Teacher
  - b. Instructional Coach
  - c. Other
12. Would you be willing to participate in an individual interview after the completion of this survey?
- a. Yes
  - b. No

## **Appendix B: Dialogue Questions**

### **Dialogue with Latinx Bilingual Teachers in Two-Way Immersion Programs**

#### **Self identity**

This portion will ask you to talk about how you currently identify yourself, to describe any changes to your self identity that occurred throughout your life, and how your identity has influenced your professional path to teach in TWI programs and the development of your beliefs about education.

- Please describe how you ethnically identify yourself.
  - How has your self-identity changed over the course of your life?
  - How does being bilingual influence your identity?
  - How does your self-identity influence your beliefs about education?

#### **Schooling**

This portion will ask you to discuss your most influential experiences in K–12 school settings in the United States that developed you as a person and as a teacher.

- Tell me about a moment in your schooling that stands out to you. Why does it stand out?
- Tell me about some influential people in your schooling that stand out to you. Why do they stand out?
- How did your experiences in your schooling (in the United States) encourage and/or undermine your identity as a person?
- How did your experiences in your schooling (in the United States) influence your decision to work in education?
  - How about in TWI programs?
- How did your experiences in your schooling (in the United States) influence the development of your beliefs about education?

#### **Family**

This portion will ask you about your family and how they influenced your educational experiences as well as the development of your beliefs about education.

- How did your family talk about education?
- How did your family experiences influence your decision to become a teacher?
  - How about to teach in TWI programs?
- How did your family influence the development of your beliefs about education?
- What was your family’s reaction to you becoming a teacher?

#### **Teaching**

This portion will ask you to describe yourself as a teacher and your path to becoming a TWI educator and your experience in TWI programs.

- What does being Latinx mean in your school setting?
  - Advantages and disadvantages
  - Connections and disconnections
- What brought you to TWI education?
  - Why did you choose to work in these programs?
  - How would you define the purpose of TWI education?
  - How does TWI education align with your beliefs about education?
  - How has your understanding of bilingual education and TWI programs developed over the years?
- Tell me about your professional experiences in education:
  - How did those experiences influence your teaching journey to TWI education?
  - How did those experiences influence the development of your beliefs about education?
  - Who are/were the influential people to you in this professional journey? Why?
  - Are there any moments from your professional experience that stand out to you?
- How does being a teacher of color impact the way you engage/connect with students of color in your bilingual classroom?
- Who has mentored you through your teaching career? How?

### **Political Consciousness**

This portion will ask about your political identity, to describe your political awakening, how you reached your current state of political consciousness, and how this influences your beliefs about education.

- How would you define/describe your political identity?
- Can you describe a meaningful experience that raised your level of political consciousness?
  - Does this experience influence your beliefs about education? If so, how?
- In your opinion, how does the political consciousness of teachers impact the learning of students of color?
- Do you perceive yourself to be a student advocate and/or teacher activist? Why or why not?

**Anything you want to add about your decision to becoming a TWI educator? -and the development of your beliefs about education?**

### **Appendix C: Journal Prompts**

Choose One prompt to answer for the following 4 weeks. You can go in order or choose the order you want to. Do not worry about grammar. Use this as a free write opportunity to explore these questions in connection with the topic of this research. As you complete the prompts, put them in your assigned google folder. Only you and I will have access to this folder and to the documents.

1. How do you view your role as a Latinx educator in your TWI program?
2. How has your identity shaped your beliefs about education?
3. How do your beliefs about education connect with your decision to work in TWI programs?
4. If you were to encourage a Latinx high school or college student to consider becoming a bilingual teacher, what would you say to that person? What benefits would you mention? What drawbacks would you mention?
5. Write about your experience this week and how it connects with your identity as Latinx?

### **Appendix D: Survey Recruitment Email/Facebook**

Dear XXXX,

I am currently conducting a study on Latinx dual language educators in Spanish two-way immersion (TWI) programs in the state of Minnesota. The study has been approved by Hamline University IRB.

I am reaching out to you to see if you could distribute the survey questionnaire among your Dual Language Teachers. The study consists of a questionnaire with 12 questions to identify potential participants to interview.

As a dual language teacher, I believe that we need to understand the journeys of our teachers of color to education, in particular Latinx bilingual teachers to TWI programs, in order to take steps to diversifying the profession.

If you agree to distribute the survey, please respond to this email. If I need to provide more information so you may consider participating in the study, do not hesitate to let me know.

Thank you in advance for your support. I look forward to hearing from you.

José Manuel Becerra-Cárdenas  
EdD Candidate  
Hamline University



## Appendix E: Dialogue Recruitment Email

Dear XXXX,

Thank you for your participation in the questionnaire titled “Dual Language Educators in Minnesota.”

I am contacting you because you completed the online questionnaire, and you volunteered to participate in a follow up individual interview.

The interview will be online, and it can be in English, Spanish, or a mix of both languages. I expect each interview will last between 45 and 60 minutes. You will be able to skip any questions. I will be conducting the interviews via Zoom, and I will audio record them via video.

Please, sign up for a time to meet with me in the next few weeks. You may reserve a time slot in two of the following ways:

1. Write your name in this form—I have listed morning and afternoon hours for the next three weeks (click here):
2. Send me an email with a time in the next three weeks that is most convenient for you at [jbecerracardenas01@hamline.edu](mailto:jbecerracardenas01@hamline.edu)

If you have any questions about scheduling, you may contact me directly at [jbecerracardenas01@hamline.edu](mailto:jbecerracardenas01@hamline.edu)

I will check the schedule form and my email regularly. The night before the day on which you sign up, I will send you a reminder and a zoom link.

For your convenience, I have attached a document with standard information about the interview and purpose of this study to this email. Let me know if you have any questions about any of the information.

Looking forward to meet you,  
José Manuel Becerra-Cárdenas  
EdD Candidate  
Hamline University

## Appendix F: Informed Consent Form

*Hamline University*

Institutional Review Board has approved this consent form.  
 IRB approval #  
 Approved:  
 Expires one year from above approval date.



### *Informed Consent to Participate in Research*

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The student researcher or faculty researcher (Principal Investigator) will provide you with a copy of this form to keep for your reference, and will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions.

This form provides important information about what you will be asked to do during the study, about the risks and benefits of the study, and about your rights as a research participant.

- If you have any questions about or do not understand something in this form, you should ask the research team for more information.
- You should feel free to discuss your potential participation with anyone you choose, such as family or friends, before you decide to participate.
- Do not agree to participate in this study unless the research team has answered your questions and you decide that you want to be part of this study.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time.

**Title of Research Study:** *YO SOY MI IDIOMA*: LATINX BILINGUALS' JOURNEYS TO TWO-WAY IMMERSION EDUCATION

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**Faculty Advisor, Hamline affiliation/title, phone number(s), and email address:** Dr. Michelle Benegas, Assistant Professor HSE, (651) 523-2301, [mbenegas01@hamline.edu](mailto:mbenegas01@hamline.edu)

**1. What is the research topic, the purpose of the research, and the rationale for why this study is being conducted?**

The purpose of this critical qualitative study is to explore the institutional and lived experiences of Latinx bilingual teachers that led them to two-way immersion (TWI) programs and to explore the development of their beliefs about education. By focusing on the voices and experiences of Latinx teachers, a group that continues to be underserved as students and underrepresented as K-12 educators, this study offers an insider perspective on the experiences that many Latinx students still face and how those experiences brought this group of bilingual teachers to education.

**2. What will you be asked to do if you decide to participate in this research study?**

If you are chosen and decide to participate in the interviews, you will meet with the researcher on zoom, where you will be asked a series of questions on the following topics: self-identity, schooling, family, teaching, and political consciousness. The questions will explore your experiences and their impact on your journey to becoming a TWI educator. The interviews will be conducted via zoom where the researcher will video and audio record the session. The videos and audios will only be accessible to the researcher and will be coded in order to protect your identity.

In addition to the interview, you will also answer four writing prompts (one per week) with questions about your experiences and their connection with your decision to become a TWI educator and the development of your beliefs about education. The writing will be done on GoogleDocs where only the researcher and you will have access to the document. Again, a code will be assigned to you to protect your privacy.

**3. What will be your time commitment to the study if you participate?**

If you decide to participate in the interview, only one session which will last between 60-90 minutes.

The journaling will be done once a week for four weeks.

**4. Who is funding this study?** This study is being conducted without funding.

**5. What are the possible discomforts and risks of participating in this research study?** By participating in this study, there is a small chance of discomfort when answering some of the questions, but you will be able to skip questions you don't want to answer as well as stop the interview at any time. A loss of confidentiality is also a risk; however, the researcher will work in assigning codes to the participants in order to decrease that risk and only he will have access to the collected artifacts and the video/audio recordings. In addition, there may be risks that are currently unknown or unforeseeable. Please contact me at [jbecerracardenas01@hamline.edu](mailto:jbecerracardenas01@hamline.edu) or (916) 588-5163, or my faculty advisor Dr. Michelle Benegas, (651) 523-2301, [mbenegas01@hamline.edu](mailto:mbenegas01@hamline.edu) to discuss this if you wish.

**6. How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your data and research records be protected?**

The data (audio/video recordings and transcripts) will be stored in my personal computer which is password protected. No one has access to my computer besides me.

The code will be also assigned to the interview files (transcripts/audio and video recordings) in order to assure the confidentiality of the participants and keeping track of which participants completed both the surveys and interviews. There will be folders for each participant's code that will be used to gather video/audio recordings as well as transcripts of the interviews on google drive, which only be accessible with my email account. The journal writings will be stored in google drive as well using my hamline account and only I and the participant writing the journal will have access to the documents. The journals will also be downloaded and saved, in my personal computer, under the code given to the participant at the beginning of the study, when they complete their survey.

Once the study is completed and the results presented the data will remain in storage for 3 years. During the summer 2024, the data will be deleted from my computer and from google docs.

**7. How many people will most likely be participating in this study, and how long is the entire study expected to last?**

Because the survey will be sent out to multiple organizations and schools, the estimated participants will be around 50.

The interviews will be conducted with a focal group, which will only be between 12 and 16 participants. Those will be the same participants completing the journal writing.

The entire study is expected to last 1-2 months in regards to data collection and 1-2 months on data analysis.

**8. What are the possible benefits to you and/or to others for your participation in this research study?**

This study will allow us to understand what brings Latinx teachers to education. This information can be used to do a better job in recruiting teachers of color (Latinx in particular) in order to bring more diversity into the teaching profession. Furthermore, this study is looking at the development of the beliefs about education on educators who work in TWI programs. This is an area that TWI programs can improve in order to provide opportunities for educators to acknowledge their beliefs and their impact on their teaching. This is done with the goal to provide more equitable opportunities for our students of color (Latinx in particular) to succeed academically.

The goal of this study is to engage in the conversation of ways to recruit and develop bilingual Latinx educators working towards equity and social justice education.

**9. If you choose to participate in this study, will it cost you anything?**

There is no cost for participating in this study.

**10. Will you receive any compensation for participating in this study?**

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

**11. What if you decide that you do not want to take part in this study? What other options are available to you if you decide not to participate or to withdraw?** Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to participate in the study, and your refusal will not influence your current or future relationships with Hamline University. If you decide you do not want to participate, you can withdraw at any time. No other option is available besides you letting know.

**12. How can you withdraw from this research study, and who should you contact if you have any questions or concerns?** You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this research study at any time without penalty. If you wish to stop your participation in this research study for any reason, you should tell me, or contact me at [jbecerracardenas01@hamline.edu](mailto:jbecerracardenas01@hamline.edu) or 916-588-5163, or my faculty advisor Dr. Michelle Benegas at [mbenegas01@hamline.edu](mailto:mbenegas01@hamline.edu) or (651) 523-2301. You should also call or email the Faculty Advisor for any questions, concerns, suggestions, or complaints about the research and your experience as a participant in the study. In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board at Hamline University at [IRB@hamline.edu](mailto:IRB@hamline.edu).

- 13. Are there any anticipated circumstances under which your participation may be terminated by the researcher(s) without your consent?** No.
- 14. Will the researchers benefit from your participation in this study?** The researchers will gain no benefit from your participation in this study beyond the publication and/or presentation of the results obtained from the study, and the invaluable research experience and hands-on learning that the students will gain as a part of their educational experience.
- 15. Where will this research be made available once the study is completed?** This research is public scholarship and the abstract and final product will be cataloged in Hamline's Bush Library Digital Commons, a searchable electronic repository. Also, this study may be published or used in other ways, such as in conference presentations or published in research journals.
- 16. Has this research study received approval from [the organization/school/district] where the research will be conducted?** N/A. This research is only investigating the lived and professional experiences of Latinx bilingual educators and their decision to work in TWI programs. This research is not attached to one specific school or district as it is investigating personal experiences of Latinx bilingual educators. Furthermore, participants will be interviewed outside school and outside school contact hours using their personal email addresses and phone numbers.