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Manteniendo la Chispa: Testimonios of Latina Veteran Urban Teachers

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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Manteniendo la Chispa:

Testimonios of Latina Veteran Urban Teachers

by

Monica K. Valencia

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

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Testimonios of Latina Veteran Urban Teachers

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by

Monica K. Valencia

This dissertation written by Monica Valencia, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

July 23, 2021
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DEDICATION

Mis logros son el resultando de generaciones de amor, esfuerzo y sacrificio. Dedico esta tesis a las generaciones pasadas y las que faltan por venir. Para todos los que aprenden a navegar dos culturas en dos idiomas. Para mi comunidad, con amor.

My achievements are the result of generations of love, effort, and sacrifice. This dissertation is dedicated to past generations and those to come. For all who learn how to navigate two cultures in two languages. For my community, with love.

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ABSTRACT

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As the student population in U.S. public schools becomes more diverse, with an increase of students of color and from low socioeconomic backgrounds, it is critical that the opportunity gaps in our education system are addressed to provide an equitable education for urban youth. To mitigate these gaps, there is a need for an experienced urban teacher workforce, but urban schools face staffing challenges that make this difficult. There is an exceptional need for Latina/o teachers, who demonstrate positive impacts on Latina/o students, the largest minority population nationwide, however, the retention rate amongst Latina/o teachers is lower than that of other demographics.

This phenomenological qualitative research study explored the personal and professional factors that sustain Latina veteran urban teachers in a predominantly Latina/o school district through the development of *testimonios*. Data was collected through a survey, instructional documents, and interviews to produce the individual *testimonios* of each participant's history as a Latina veteran urban teacher and a cross-case analysis of the participants' shared experiences.

The findings demonstrated that Latina veteran urban teachers possessed *la chispa,* the spark, for serving students who share their cultural and linguistic identity. These teachers ignited,

fueled, and preserved their *chispa* through various personal and professional factors, including a commitment to serving urban students, a dedication to continuous professional growth, and the support from personal and professional networks. These findings can inform teacher preparation programs and school systems on how to prepare and sustain Latina teachers for long-term careers in urban education.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Mi Testimonio

I was raised in a predominantly Latina/o community until the age of six, immersed in my native language and culture. My parents emigrated from Mexico as adolescents and through social immersion and some formal education; they both became fluent English speakers. Even so, I never heard a word of English spoken at home as a young child. With this upbringing, I grew to be proud of my roots and identity as a Latina. Right before starting first-grade, my family moved to a different city. At the time, Latinos were nonexistent in my new neighborhood and my classroom was full of native English speakers. This resulted in complete culture shock. As a six-year-old, I had a limited understanding of language and culture. All I knew was that no one at this new school understood me, including my teacher.

My parents set the example of maintaining a strong work ethic in aspiration of *el Sueño Americano*, the American Dream, and instilled in me a deep value for education. Although my parents did not have the opportunity to meet their own academic goals, they encouraged my brother and me to do well in school because they believed that education was the most reliable vehicle for progress. Within a few months at my new school, I had chipped away at the language barrier and started to pick up enough words to survive socially. Eventually, I became fluent. The culture; however, did not come as easily. Growing up in a predominately White community, I began identifying all of the ways, besides language, that I was different from my neighbors, teachers, and peers. I struggled to find a place where I felt like I truly belonged.

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After learning English as my second language, I maintained high grades and became an honors student and student athlete. With this formula, I was tracked in the school system with the "good kids" for my secondary education. My teachers were encouraging and invested extra time after school and on the weekends to prepare my peers and me for AP tests. My counselor would pull me out of class to help me register for SATs, complete university applications, and work on personal statements. Even though I had limited social capital, I was able to navigate the educational system successfully because I was tracked.

Despite my academic outcomes, being immersed in a culture and language different from my own in a society that praises assimilation brought about its own challenges. My native language, Spanish, was only used during elective language courses. My Mexican culture and history were scarcely acknowledged, except through the extracurricular clubs that I joined. Essentially, the responsibility of sustaining my linguistic and cultural practices was up to me.

Luckily, my parents maintained our language, culture, and values at home and kept me connected to my roots through annual summer trips to visit family and friends in Mexico. The most vivid memories I have of my childhood are from these trips. Each summer felt like a homecoming after a school year of trying to fit in while negotiating my culture. Nevertheless, even in Mexico I felt like somewhat of an outsider. It was hard to blend into my dad's humble Mexican town with my American clothes, modified customs, and evident privilege. I experienced what many immigrant children and children of immigrant parents experience, that feeling of not belonging. *Ni de aquí, ni de allá*. Not from here, nor from there. Nevertheless, I had the privilege and opportunity to stay immersed in my language and culture and grew up proud of my heritage. Growing up Latina, I constantly had to reevaluate my identity while

moving in and out of two cultures. In the privacy of my home and family life, I spoke Spanish and engaged in Mexican traditions. Out in the world and in school, however, I had to blend in by speaking another language and adapting to mainstream American customs. I became very aware of how our social and political system pressures students of color to assimilate and deflect from their cultural identity.

As I progressed through the schooling system, I realized more and more that my academic achievements were an exception. I was exposed to the other side of our educational system, full of inequities and missed opportunities, through my soccer friends, many of whom were also the children of immigrant parents or immigrants themselves. Unlike me, they rarely met with their counselors and when they did, they would focus on high school graduation requirements. Most were unaware of the A through G University of California admission requirements, and some were even discouraged from pursuing higher education. Many did not receive extra support from their teachers, although some of them needed it. Initially, none of this made sense to me, but as my critical consciousness developed, I began to gain a better understanding of the issues in our schooling systems that produce these inequities.

I also began to recognize the scarcity of people of color, specifically Latinos, in the educator workforce, which explained the lack of linguistic and cultural connection that I felt throughout my education. Of course, there were always those teachers who stood out, despite the systemic challenges. The classes that I enjoyed the most were with teachers who made an effort to build relationships with my peers and me. Some of these teachers also took it upon themselves to make learning relevant by learning more about my family, language, and culture, even if they did not share the same background or experiences. During conversations with friends, I realized

that I was not the only one who felt this way. These teachers did not just implement these practices with their honors students, but with all students who entered their classrooms. These teachers helped me realize and appreciate the importance of teachers who are not just effective instructors, but great relationship builders. Realizing the potential of my own impact as a Latina emergent bilingual, I was further inspired to become an educator with the purpose of improving the educational system for students of color, like my friends and me.

As a classroom teacher, my personal experiences motivated me to provide a different experience for my students. I did not want my own Latina/o students to feel like they had to negotiate their culture or heritage language in order to succeed in my classroom. On the contrary, I worked to sustain and build upon these assets so that students learned to capitalize on their cultural and linguistic abilities. I found purpose in serving my students in this manner. Through them, I was able to create opportunities and experiences that I was not granted as a Latina, emergent bilingual student.

This is *mi testimonio,* my personal narrative retelling of my history as a Latina urban educator. The goal of this study was to shed light on other Latina veteran urban teachers' experiences through their *testimonios*. *Testimonios* are critical narratives that tell the stories of individuals from marginalized groups in order to interject these stories into the mainstream narrative (Delgado, 1989; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). *Testimonios* are a culturally relevant methodological research approach. In this study, the *testimonios* of six Latina veteran urban teachers were shared to identify the personal and professional factors that sustained them as urban elementary teachers. Through these *testimonios,* I aimed to contribute Latina veteran urban teachers' narratives into the mainstream narrative focused on veteran teachers and urban

education. Additionally, my hope was to build solidarity through the shared experiences of the Latina participants of this study.

<div align="center">**Background of the Problem**</div>

Public schools in the United States are experiencing shifts in student demographics, especially in urban settings (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2020; 2019). With these changes, it is becoming more and more imperative that we address the systemic challenges in our urban schools in order to close the opportunity gap that currently exists for urban students.

Student Demographic Changes

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2019), student enrollment in public schools increased by over three million students from 2000 to 2015. In the same period, there was a 12% decrease in enrollment of White students, while the percentage of Hispanic/Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander students increased, and the percentage of Black and American Indian/Alaskan Native students remained the same (NCES, 2019). Latinos are already the largest minority group in the United States, and it is estimated that by 2050, the Latina/o school-age population will increase by over 150% (Irizarry, 2016).

Public schools have also enrolled an increased number of emergent bilinguals, or students learning English as a second language. The population of students across the nation who were identified as emergent bilinguals increased by two percent, or over 1.2 million students, from 2000 to 2017 (NCES, 2020).

Student Demographics in Urban Schools

Traditionally, the term urban describes a geographic region that is densely populated. Recently, however, it has become the most acceptable adjective to describe an area that is mostly inhabited by people of color and from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Eckert, 2013; Noguera, 2003). This term has replaced more derogatory terms such as ghetto, hood, slum, or barrio (Noguera, 2003). Urban schools, consequently, tend to serve communities with less resources, more families in the lowest quartile for socioeconomic status, and a higher minority and emergent bilingual population (Eckert, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

These schools service a student population with a higher percentage of students living in poverty, with 42% of schools labeled as high poverty schools and 24% labeled as mid high poverty schools (NCES, 2020). In addition, urban schools usually have higher enrollment numbers than suburban and rural schools (U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Latina/o youth specifically are more likely to be enrolled in schools that are segregated by race and class, in comparison to other ethnic groups (Noguera, 2009).

For this study, urban schools were defined as schools with a student population that is comprised of a majority of minority students and a majority of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds as identified by free and reduced lunch qualification. Clearly defining urban schools is imperative to comprehending the unique challenges within these schools due to their urban status. Table 1 presents comparative demographic data on student characteristics by school type in the United States.

Table 1

K-12 Student Characteristics by School Type in United States in Percentages

Characteristic	Total	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Disabilities	13.5	13.6	13.2	13.9
Emergent bilingual	9.6	14.0	9.3	3.8
Free or reduced lunch	48	61	38	45
Race/ethnicity				
White	48.2	28.7	48.7	69.9
Black	15.3	232	13.6	9.4
Hispanic/Latino	26.4	36.4	26.5	13.8
Asian	5.1	6.9	6.4	1.6
Pacific Islander	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.2
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.0	0.7	0.4	2.0
Two or more races	3.6	3.8	3.9	3.0
Poverty level				
High poverty	21.2	42	18	15
Mid-high poverty	28.3	24	22	29
Mid-low poverty	25.7	21	28	37
Low poverty	24.2	12	32	19

Note. Adapted from *The Condition of Education 2020*, by National Center for Educational Statistics, 2020.
https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020144.pdf. Copyright 2020 by National Center for Educational Statistics.

Following the demographic trends across the nation, urban schools are continuing to become more diversified. Urban schools have experienced greater ethnic and racial

diversification and a higher influx of emergent bilinguals than schools located in less urbanized areas (NCES, 2019, 2020).

Systemic Challenges in Urban Schools

Research demonstrates that teachers are the single most influential factor in student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Rockoff, 2003; Wright et al., 1997). However, teachers have not been equipped to address the diverse needs of urban students (Abel & Sewell 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2003). Although 61.7% of our teacher workforce has over ten years of experience, these teachers have not had the expected impacts on student outcomes (Rockoff, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Students in urban schools are more likely to experience poverty, racism, violence, drug abuse, insecure housing, insufficient health care, and other hurdles in their personal lives (Nieto, 2010). These social inequities inevitably affect urban students within the school context, requiring urban teachers to meet academic objectives while also helping students mitigate these societal barriers. The lack of urban teacher preparation in addition to other challenges places urban teachers at a higher risk of stress and burnout in comparison to teachers in other contexts (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Noguera, 2003). As a result, the teacher turnover rate in urban schools is twice as high as in nonurban schools, leading to a higher concentration of novice teachers and teachers who are unqualified for their assignment (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012; NCES, 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2018). These combined obstacles have left our most vulnerable students with teachers who are less experienced, less qualified, or simply stressed and burnt out.

The collective challenges that students and teachers in urban schools have to overcome, has resulted in an evident opportunity gap for urban students (Carnoy & García, 2017; Gregory

et al., 2010). The disparity in academic outcomes between students of color and White students is evidenced by grades, standardized testing results, graduation rates, and college enrollment rates (Carnoy & García, 2017; NCES, 2019). This is also true for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (NCES, 2019). Additionally, students of color experience inequitable behavior discipline practices, receiving more frequent and harsher consequences compared to their White peers (Gregory et al., 2010; Mendez & Knoff, 2003). To address this opportunity gap, it is imperative that urban teachers have the knowledge, ability, and commitment to positively impact urban student outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Due to the systemic challenges in urban schools and the opportunity gap that has resulted, it is critical that our urban schools are staffed with experienced and effective teachers. Urban schools require teachers that are uniquely equipped to meet the diverse needs of students from marginalized backgrounds. One teacher demographic that has demonstrated to have such skills are teachers of color. Research shows that teachers of color positively impact urban students' outcomes in various ways, including improved academic achievement results, graduation rates, and college attendance rates (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Noguera, 2009). This is due to various reasons, such as having a shared linguistic and cultural background, implementing more culturally relevant instruction, and adopting a more assets-based perspective (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Noguera, 2009). However, despite students of color being over 50% of the student population across the United States, teachers of color only compose 21% of the workforce (NCES, 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). This is due to numerous stages in the teacher pipeline at which diversity dwindles, from students entering postsecondary

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school to obtaining teaching credentials (NCES, 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Furthermore, even when teachers of color successfully enter the workforce, they have a lower retention rate in comparison to White teachers (Emmanuel, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

When examining the data on Latina/o teachers specifically, the data is more concerning. Latina/o students comprise over 50% of the student population, while Latina/o teachers form 9% of the teacher workforce (NCES, 2020). Although Latina/o teachers are the fastest growing demographic entering the teaching profession, they are also leaving the profession at a higher rate (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015; Griffin, 2018).

There is limited research on the efficacy of Latina/o teachers on urban students, but some research demonstrates that they have positive impacts on students of color and White students as well. Latina/o teachers demonstrate an ability to develop strong relationships with all students, offer students support in navigating the school system as they pursue higher education, and show a commitment for giving back to their own communities (Griffin, 2018). Additionally, Latina teachers act as cultural guardians, supporting and protecting students that share their cultural background (Flores, 2017). Understanding that the Latina/o demographic across the country will continue growing exponentially over the next few decades, there will be a higher need for to recruit and retain Latina/o teachers who can positively impact Latina/o student outcomes to curb the opportunity gap. Current trends, however, show little hope for this to take place.

With the disproportionate demographics between Latina/o students and Latina/o teachers and the high attrition rate amongst Latina/o teachers, more research is needed to examine the factors that help sustain Latina/o teachers who successfully enter the teaching field. This research

study sought to contribute to that gap in the literature in an effort to support the retention of more Latina/o teachers in urban schools for the benefit of urban students, specifically Latina/o students. When discussing urban students, the context of this study was a majority Latina/o urban student population.

Research Question

To better understand the factors that impact Latina urban teachers throughout their professional careers, this study explored the experiences of Latina veteran urban teachers in a predominantly Latina/o elementary school district through the development of *testimonios*. This was done by asking the following research question:

What are the personal and professional factors that sustain Latina veteran urban teachers?

Addressing this question provided insight on how Latina veteran urban elementary teachers maintain their motivation and dedication to remain in urban schools long term. By answering this question, we can inform practices that support and prolong the careers of Latina teachers in urban schools.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the personal and professional factors that contribute to sustaining Latina veteran urban teachers throughout their tenure in a predominantly Latina/o urban elementary school district in Southern California. Additionally, this study also sought to highlight the voices of Latina veteran urban teachers through *testimonios*, or critical narratives of their personal and professional stories (Blackmer Reyes & Curry Rodriguez, 2012). By gaining a better understanding of the experiences of Latina veteran urban teachers, we can work towards retaining more Latina teachers in the profession.

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Significance of the Study

This study has the potential to benefit our educational system at various levels. Establishing a better understanding of Latina veteran urban teachers' experiences can inform administrators at the site and district level in developing targeted and systematic support to sustain this teacher demographic. Additionally, identifying the personal and professional factors that sustain Latina veteran urban teachers and support them in overcoming challenges can help teacher preparation programs empower novice Latina teachers with the skills necessary to surpass hurdles they may encounter along their teaching career. Latina teachers themselves can use this study to reflect upon their own personal and professional practices and how they may be affecting their current ability to resist burn out and stress. Consequently, urban students would reap the benefits of having educators at their sites who are working towards bettering their educational experiences through the maintenance of experienced Latina teachers.

Connection to Social Justice

This study aimed to discover the personal and professional factors that sustain Latina urban teachers through veterancy in a predominantly Latina/o district in an effort to support all urban teachers. The adoption of these practices could help urban districts retain more Latina teachers by supporting them in preventing plateauing, frustration, or burnout, which leads to attrition, ineffectiveness, and poor student outcomes. Consequently, by decreasing Latina teacher turnover in urban schools, there is the potential to develop a solid base of culturally sustaining Latina veteran urban teachers for years to come. Through the implementation of these practices Latina urban teachers could be maintained through the end of a teacher's career cycle, thus helping to close the opportunity gap in our educational system and producing opportunities that

are more equitable for children, regardless of their demographic background. Urban teachers

serve the most marginalized student populations; therefore, the sustenance and success of these

teachers is critical to providing urban students with equity and access through our education

system. Lastly, the use of *testimonios* in this study contributed the voices of Latina teachers to

the mainstream narrative on veteran teachers and urban education.

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Theoretical Framework

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Two theoretical frameworks were combined to guide this study, teachers as intellectuals

and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Giroux, 1988; Paris & Alim, 2017).

Teachers as Intellectuals

Viewing teachers as intellectuals is foundationally based on the understanding that

effective teaching requires teachers to think critically about their practice (Giroux, 1988).

Intellectual teachers are reflective practitioners who develop their own curriculum and plan

instruction based on an understanding of their students' needs (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999;

Giroux, 2010). Additionally, teachers who are intellectuals take charge of self-implemented

inquiry cycles to support their data analysis and daily practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999;

Giroux, 2010).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

In addition to using teachers as intellectuals as a theoretical framework, this study was

also informed by culturally sustaining pedagogy. Culturally sustaining pedagogy is an asset-

based pedagogy that expands on and is informed by culturally relevant pedagogy (Paris & Alim,

2017). The aim of culturally sustaining pedagogy is to maintain cultural pluralism in schooling

by treating learning as an additive practice that builds upon student strengths through five key

elements (Paris & Alim, 2017). These five elements are (a) critical centering on community languages, practices, and knowledges, (b) student and community agency and input, (c) historicized cultural and linguistic content and instruction, (d) capacity to contend with internalized oppressions, and (e) an ability to curricularize these four elements (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Two Frameworks Combined

These two frameworks were selected for this study because they are complementary and provide a critical lens for the research. Teachers that are intellectuals understand that teaching is a political and moral act (Freire, 2018; Giroux, 1988, 2010). They also comprehend that social, economic, and political context affects students inside the classroom, so these teachers design their instruction accordingly (Giroux, 2010). Therefore, urban teachers that are intellectuals inevitably employ many of the key elements of culturally sustaining pedagogy in order to effectively support and maintain students' cultures and languages.

Research Design and Methodology

This study utilized a phenomenological qualitative research design to explore the personal and professional factors that sustain Latina veteran urban elementary teachers through the development of *testimonios*, or critical narratives.

Participants

The participants in this study were from River City Elementary School District, which is a pseudonym for a Southern California district that consisted of all elementary schools. This district had an 85.4% Latina/o student population with 67.9% of students identified as English

Language Learners and 84.4% of students from socioeconomically disadvantaged households (California Department of Education [CDE], 2019).

The six participants in this study were selected through criterion sampling (Leavy, 2017). Appendix A includes the email that was sent to all veteran urban teachers in River City Elementary School District. Within this email a teacher demographic and screening survey was included to collect demographic data, information on professional history, and ratings on culturally sustaining practice implementation. The criteria that were used to select participants who submitted the survey were as follows:

- **veteran teacher**: The teacher has at least ten years of teaching experience in an urban school (Rockoff, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

- **urban teacher**: The teacher currently serves in a school with a student population that is comprised of a majority of minority students and a majority of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds as identified by free and reduced lunch qualification (Eckert, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006; NCES, 2020; Noguera, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

- **culturally sustaining pedagogue**: The teacher employs culturally sustaining pedagogy as an instructional framework in order to meet the unique needs of urban students (Paris & Alim, 2017).

The requirement of having teachers self-identify as culturally sustaining pedagogues ensured that the selected teachers exhibited practices that demonstrated a comprehensive approach to teaching urban students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Paris & Alim, 2017). Through the selection process, I discovered that the only applicants who rated

themselves highly in all culturally sustaining practices were Latinas. At this point, the study shifted its focus from veteran urban teachers to Latina veteran urban teachers.

Data Collection

In this study, data was collected through several sources, including the screening survey, instructional documents, semi-structured interviews, and field notes. Appendix B includes the survey used to collect data on participants' demographics, professional histories, and implementation of culturally sustaining practices. Documents, such as lesson plans, student work, and recorded lessons, provided evidence of culturally sustaining instruction. A series of three sequential phenomenological interviews were utilized to collect qualitative data based on Seidman's (2006) three-interview series for phenomenological research. The first interview focused on the participant's life history in terms of the phenomena being researched. Then, the second interview covered the participant's contemporary experience as Latina veteran urban teacher. Finally, the third interview supported the participant in creating meaning of her experiences as a Latina veteran urban teacher through reflection. Appendix C contains the three interview protocols for this study. Finally, Appendix D contains the field notes template. Field notes were taken during the interview process to document my initial reactions and thoughts from each interview. Through this design, the data was triangulated to develop a comprehensive, contextualized understanding of the experiences of effective urban elementary veteran teachers.

Data Analysis

Data analysis initiated during the three-interview series. Each interview with a participant provided guidance for topics to revisit in the following interview as I began noticing preliminary trends across multiple participants. The data analysis continued as the *testimonios* were

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developed (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Two rounds of inductive coding were completed to create topical themes (Creswell, 2014). The *testimonios* were organized into three sections based on these topical themes. Member checking of the *testimonios* was implemented to establish trustworthiness and to verity an accurate representation of each participant's story (Creswell, 2014; Seidman, 2006). Finally, a cross-case analysis of all six *testimonios* was completed. I refined codes and created more general themes at this point. An additional round of deductive coding was completed using the theoretical framework as a lens (Creswell, 2014).

Limitations of the Study

Limitations

This study had several limitations. The primary limitation of the study was its sample size of six participants. Additionally, all participants were Latina. The average years of service amongst teachers in River City Elementary School District was 13 years, which would qualify most teachers as veteran educators. Also, the district as a whole qualifies as an urban district due to its student demographics. Although these two initial criteria were met by a majority of teachers in the district, not all of them identified as culturally sustaining pedagogues or implemented culturally sustaining practices; therefore, the pool of participants was narrowed (CDE, 2020; Paris & Alim, 2017).

Another limitation of this study was that self-reporting was used in all of the data collection methods. Participants provided their own ratings of their culturally sustaining practices in the screening survey, self-selected instructional documents, and shared accounts of their experiences as Latina veteran urban teachers, based on their own perspectives.

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Due to the use of a qualitative research design, the researcher was the main data collection instrument, which is another limitation of the study. Inevitably, my own perspective and experiences as a Latina educator could have influenced the data collection and analysis process.

Delimitations

There were various delimitations in this research that limit its generalizability. The setting of this study was a delimitation for various reasons. This study was conducted in an urban elementary school district; therefore, the perspectives of veteran urban teachers in secondary schools was not included. Additionally, this district had a majority Latina/o student population, making it distinct from other urban school districts that may have a different student population breakdown (CDE, 2020). Because the data collection for this study only took place in one district, the context of this district may have affected results.

Another delimitation was the incorporation of culturally sustaining pedagogical practices as a criterion for participant selection. This may have resulted in overlooking other urban teachers who were successfully sustained in the profession but did not identify as culturally sustaining pedagogues.

Additionally, this study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. As schools across the world transitioned to distance learning, teachers had to adapt to a new schooling model that many of them were not prepared for. With heightened levels of personal and professional stress, many teachers communicated that they did not feel comfortable taking on additional endeavors, which excluded many qualified veteran urban teachers from applying to participate.

Definitions of Key Terms

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogue— teacher who adopts an asset based, culturally sustaining approach to teaching in efforts to sustain and expand students' linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy—an asset based method of teaching that aims to sustain and expand students' linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge through five key elements, which are (a) critical centering on community languages, practices, and knowledges, (b) student and community agency and input, (c) historicized cultural and linguistic content and instruction, (d) capacity to contend with internalized oppressions, and (e) an ability to curricularize these four elements (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Effective Urban Teacher—an intellectual teacher who has a strong ideological foundation specific to diverse students grounded by culturally sustaining pedagogy (Giroux, 1988, 2010; Paris & Alim, 2017).

Emergent Bilingual—an asset-based term used to describe students who are acquiring English skills in addition to maintaining their primary language (García et al., 2008).

Urban School—schools with a student population that is comprised of a majority of minority students and a majority of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds as identified by free and reduced lunch qualification (Eckert, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006; NCES, 2020; Noguera, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

Veteran Teacher—a teacher with at least ten years of classroom experience (Rockoff, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Organization of Dissertation

The introduction presented in this chapter served to lay a foundational understanding of the challenges that urban schools face in maintaining an effective teacher workforce for urban students and how this impacts students from marginalized backgrounds. The value of exploring how Latina veteran urban teachers sustain their commitment to serving in urban schools throughout their extensive careers was also highlighted. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature on teacher effectiveness, teacher career cycles, and the challenges urban teachers face. The methodology of this qualitative study is illustrated in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 presents the findings from each participant's individual *testimonio.* Then, Chapter 5 identifies the collective findings through a cross-case analysis. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes this study with a discussion and implications of the data and recommendations based on the findings.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Before delving into this study, it is necessary to understand the existent literature on Latina veteran urban teachers. This literature review is organized into various sections. First, an explanation of various ideologies on the teaching profession are presented followed by a description of the current challenges in urban schools. Then, literature on the teacher career cycle is covered, including a description of veteran teachers and the challenges they face. This is followed by the impacts of effective teachers and the effects of Latina teachers on urban students. Comprehending this literature is essential to being able to contextualize the study at hand.

Teacher Profession Ideologies

Teacher effectiveness has been scrutinized by policy makers, the media, and the public in the United States for decades. This has become a popular critique of our education system and, consequently, has inspired the development of multiple attempts at educational reform focused on teacher preparation, evaluation, and accountability (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018). Most of these approaches to improving teacher effectiveness started with the perspective of teachers as technicians who need to follow prescribed best practices that are identified by educational experts outside of the classroom (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018; Giroux, 2010; Tuinamuana, 2011). In contrast, the ideology of viewing teachers as intellectuals acknowledges the expertise that teachers possess and empowers them to make their own instructional decisions (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Giroux, 2010). This section delves deeper into these two ideologies on the teaching profession.

Teachers as Technicians

One of the predominant perspectives of the teaching profession is that of teachers as technicians. Under this ideology, the focus is on teaching methods, techniques, and practice (Giroux, 2010). Teachers are expected to adopt instructional strategies to teach prespecified subject matter and to receive, consume, and implement prespecified curriculum (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Giroux, 2010). As a result, teachers are disempowered and deskilled to obey the decisions dictated by curriculum companies, other researchers, curriculum coaches, and administrators, without critiquing whether their instruction covers what students need to learn or if they are being sensitive to students' cultural and intellectual needs (Giroux, 1988). Giroux (1988) argued that when teachers are treated as technicians this "organizes school life around curricular, instructional, and evaluation experts who do the thinking while teachers are reduced to doing the implementing" (Chapter 9, Section 3, para.8).

This ideology of teachers as technicians derived from a neoliberalist approach to education that prioritizes productivity and results (Giroux, 2010; Tuinamuana, 2011). Top-down teacher accountability measures, such as standardized tests, content standards, and teacher professional standards, were created from a pedagogy of technique with the aim to produce improved student achievement, as measured by test scores (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018; Giroux, 2010; Tuinamuana, 2011). Due to this mindset, teacher preparation programs have been critiqued with focusing too much on education theory and not enough on practical teaching methods (Giroux, 2010). Consequently, the ideology of teachers as technicians adopted a banking method of education, where teachers are the gate keepers of knowledge and transfer this knowledge to passive students (Freire, 2018).

Teachers as Intellectuals

Another perspective on the teaching profession views teachers as intellectuals. At its foundation, this ideology recognized that teaching requires teachers to think critically about their practice (Giroux, 1988). Intellectual teachers are treated as reflective practitioners who develop their own curriculum, conduct inquiry cycles that they take charge of, and make instructional decisions based on their own data analysis and daily practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Giroux, 1988). As a result, teachers view data as a tool for their own improvement, as opposed to as a tool for evaluators or outside researchers (Bryk, 2015). Teachers are empowered to act as professional experts with reasoned judgement. In summary, intellectual teachers employ praxis, or "the transition from critical thought to reflective intervention in the world" (Giroux, 1981, p.117).

Viewing teachers as intellectuals stems from critical pedagogy, thus teaching is viewed as a political and moral act with the purpose of enabling students to think critically, actively engage in the construction of knowledge, and develop a sense of civic and social responsibility through the process of critical dialogue (Freire, 2018; Giroux, 1988, 2010). Intellectual teachers understand that context impacts students and therefore, must influence instruction (Giroux, 2010).

What teachers think or do not think leads to how they implement, adjust, and refine their practice (Education Week, 2018; Giroux, 2010). Consequently, this thinking, or lack of, has an effect on student learning. Understanding the varying ideologies on the teaching profession is necessary to understand how teachers operate within their school contexts. To detail the context in which urban teachers work, the next section describes the unique challenges in urban schools.

Systemic Challenges in Urban Schools

Systemic challenges in urban schools have led to failed education in our most vulnerable communities. In this section, I will present various systemic challenges that urban schools face.

Lack of Teacher Preparation

Although changes have been made in the past three decades to better prepare teachers, our system does not equip teachers on a wide scale to serve effectively in urban settings (Murrell, 2000). Teachers lack the preparation required to meet the unique needs of urban students (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2003). Teacher preparation programs have made progress in incorporating more content specific to urban school contexts and placing teacher candidates in more diverse fieldwork settings, however, there is still a wide gap in urban teachers' skillset (Celik & Amak, 2012). This poor preparation of teachers to serve urban youth has caused additional challenges for urban schools.

Low Teacher Retention and High Turnover

Teachers in urban schools have a higher risk of stress and burnout compared to teachers in other contexts (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Noguera, 2003). This is partially due to their lack of preparation (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Urban schoolteachers also experience poorer working conditions and lower pay (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Jacob, 2007). As a result, teachers leave high minority and high poverty schools at a disproportionally high rate (Hanushek et al., 2001). This contributes to a turnover rate in urban schools that is twice as high as in non-urban schools (NCES, 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Teachers in high poverty schools move sites at a rate of 12% and leave the profession altogether at a rate of 10% (NCES, 2020). With these low teacher

retention and high teacher turnover rates, urban schools have a more transient teacher workforce leading to staffing challenges.

Staffing Challenges

As a result of poor teacher preparation, high teacher turnover, and low teacher retention rates, urban schools face unique staffing challenges that are financially costly, including recruiting, hiring, and training new teachers (Barnes et al., 2007). The teacher attrition in urban schools has led to a higher concentration of beginning teachers and teachers who are unqualified for their assignment (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012). Consequently, the most inexperienced or underqualified teachers are charged with responsibility of educating students with the highest academic, linguistic, social, and emotional needs, which has led to despairing outcomes in urban schools.

Analysis of Systemic Challenges

The systemic challenges that are faced by urban schools have a direct impact on the quality of education that urban students receive. Underprepared teachers in urban schools lack the knowledge and skills to properly address the needs of urban youth (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Celik & Amak, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2003). Additionally, they are not primed to handle the working conditions associated with urban education (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Jacob, 2007). These issues lead to high stress and burnout amongst urban teachers and, consequently, low teacher retention, high teacher turnover, and staffing challenges (Barnes et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1998; NCES, 2020). Summatively, these systemic challenges have resulted in a lack of quality education for our urban students.

Opportunity Gap for Urban Students

The complexity of systemic challenges that urban schools, students, and teachers face has produced an evident opportunity gap for urban students. This is evidenced by the disproportionate academic outcomes and discipline policy implementation that impact urban youth. This section will describe the opportunity gap that results from these inequities.

Academic Outcomes for Urban Students

There is a stark underperformance of students of color and from low socioeconomic backgrounds as documented by grades, standardized testing results, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment rates (Carnoy & García, 2017; NCES, 2019). Some of these academic school outcomes are presented in Table 2, which differentiates school outcomes based on school locale.

Table 2

Student Academic Outcomes by School Type in United States in Percentages

Outcome	Total	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Graduated with high school diploma	89	81	86	93
Went on to a four-year college	39	39	42	40
Reached proficient or above on 4th grade math assessment	41	36	46	40
Reached proficient or above on 4th grade reading assessment	35	31	41	34
Reached proficient or above on 8th grade math assessment	35	30	38	33
Reached proficient or above on 8th grade reading assessment	34	30	38	33

Note. High school graduation and four-year college rates adapted from *The Condition of Education 2020*, by National Center for Educational Statistics, 2020. https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020144.pdf. Copyright 2020 by National Center for Educational Statistics. Assessment rates adapted from *The Nation's Report Card,* by National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2019. https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore/landing. Copyright 2019 by National Assessment of Educational Progress.

Race and socioeconomic status have shown to be predictive of students' academic achievement (Carnoy & García, 2017). The gap in academic outcomes has narrowed since the 1990; however, it has stalled since then according to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019). When focusing on student outcomes by ethnicity, the disparities between minority students and their White peers becomes more evident. Comparatively in fourth-grade, Hispanic/Latino students scored 23 points below White students in reading and 19 points below them in math on a national assessment (NCES, 2019). Black students scored 26 points lower than their White peers in reading and 25 points below in math (NCES, 2019). High school completion rates for 18 to 24 year olds in the U.S. also show disparities with graduation rates of 94% for White, 92% for Black, and 89% for Hispanic/Latino students (NCES, 2019).

Inequitable Discipline Policy Implementation

Aside from lower academic outcomes, urban students, additionally suffer because of inequitable behavior discipline practices. Increases in externalized student behavior have been correlated with lower family income and higher poverty (Duncan et al., 1994). Minority students are given more frequent and harsher consequences, such as suspensions and expulsions, compared to their White peers for relatively minor misbehaviors (Gregory et al., 2010; Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Teachers excessively implement harsher discipline practices for minority students due to their biased perceptions of student misbehavior, which further evidence the lack of adequate urban teacher preparation. These disciplinary measures along with low academic performance, increase urban students' probability of dropping out of school before graduating high school (Gregory et al., 2010; Mendez & Knoff, 2003).

Analysis of Opportunity Gap

Youth in urban schools face a wide range of challenges including poverty, racism, violence, drug abuse, lack of housing, insufficient health care, and more (Nieto, 2010). These challenges inevitably affect urban youth within their learning environment. Urban schools also tend to have limited parent involvement, fewer resources, and inequitable funding (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Noguera, 2003). Additionally, as previously mentioned, teachers are under prepared to support the various needs of students in urban schools (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2003). Therefore, they are not equipped to meet the academic needs of urban students and lack the training to understand their behaviors. This lack of preparation leads to high teacher stress, burnout, and attrition in urban schools (Darling-Hammond, 1998; NCES, 2020; Noguera, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Because of these combined factors, urban students are often in classrooms with teachers who are underprepared, inexperienced, or stressed. This formula leads to poor academic outcomes and inequitable discipline policy implementations. Consequently, urban youth have fewer opportunities to continue their education or to qualify for well-paying jobs. To mitigate these challenges and improve outcomes for these students, urban schoolteachers must be uniquely equipped to serve urban students personal and academic needs throughout their careers. In the next section, I will review literature on teacher career cycles to help contextualize the experiences of veteran teachers.

Teacher Career Cycle

Researchers have developed various career cycle models to explain the trajectory of classroom teachers. These models help explain why each teacher can experience the profession

differently once he or she reaches veterancy and what factors influence these differences. I will cover two distinct models that help explain teacher development.

Dynamic and Flexible Stages

One model of teacher career cycles is Fessler's dynamic and flexible stages (1985; as cited in Lynn, 2002). This model was organized into eight stages, as demonstrated in Figure 1, which are preservice, induction, competency building, enthusiastic and growing, career frustration, career stability, career wind down, and career exit (Fessler, 1985, as cited in Lynn, 2002). Personal and organizational environment factors impact how teachers move forward or regress through these stages (Day et al., 2006; Lynn, 2002). Personal factors include life phase, individual dispositions, hobbies, family life, life events, and crisis while organizational environment factors can be professional organizations, societal expectations, management style, regulations, and public trust (Lynn, 2002). According to Lynn (2002), the competency building stage is critical for teachers because it can lead to either the career frustration stage which could cause burnout and early career exit, the career stability stage in which teachers may become stagnant, or the enthusiastic and growing stage where they enjoy their careers and seek continued development (Lynn, 2002).

Figure 1

Dynamic and Flexible Stages
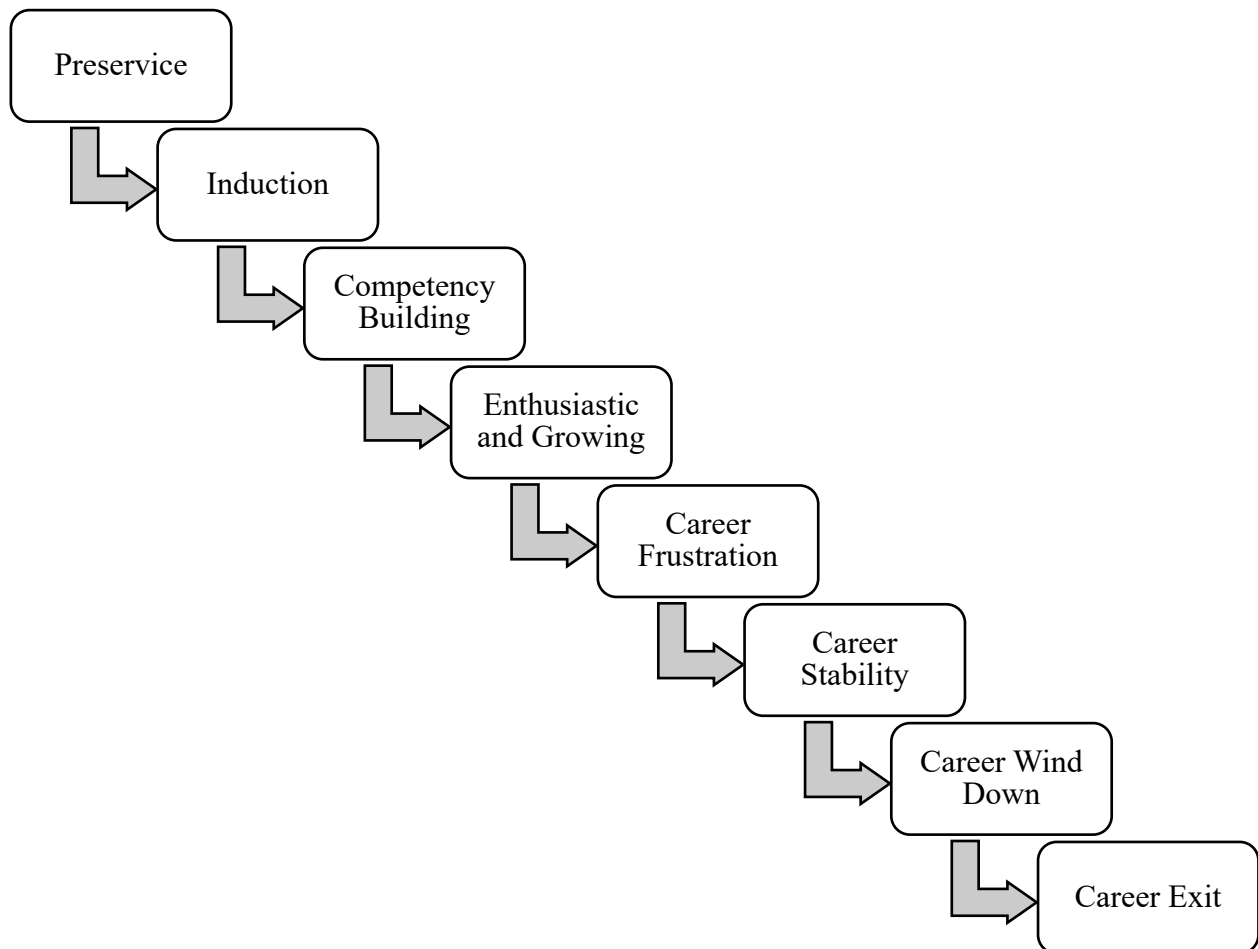
Note: Adapted from "The Winding Path: Understanding the Career Cycle of Teachers" by S. K. Lynn, 2002, *Clearing House, 75*(4), 179-82. Copyright 2002 by Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation.

Progressive Phases

Steffy et al. (2000) identified the six progressive phases in a teacher's career as novice, apprentice, professional, expert, distinguished, and emeritus, as shown in Figure 2. This model begins with preservice teachers' first experiences in the classroom through alternative roles in education post retirement (Steffy et al., 2000). Progression through these phases is promoted

when teachers engage in cycles of reflection, renewal, and growth (Steffy et al., 2000). Teachers'

development in this model is directional and driven by the need to improve (Steffy et al., 2000).

Individual development and social context influence the level of developmental growth or

withdrawal within each stage (Steffy et al., 2000).

Figure 2

Progressive Phases
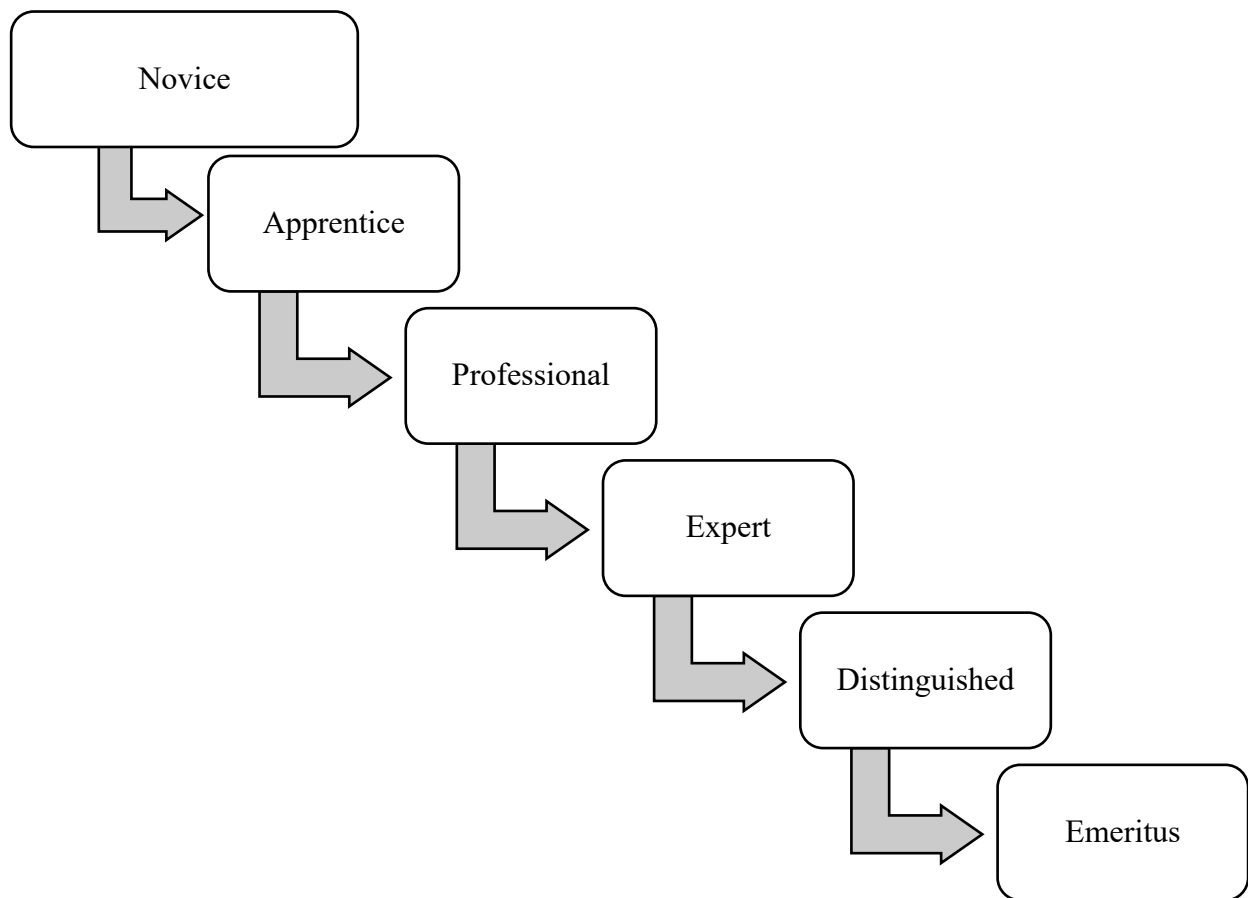
Note: Adapted from *Life Cycle of the Career Teacher* by B. E. Steffy, M. P. Wolfe, S. Pasch, and B. Enz, 2000,
Corwin Press. Copyright 2000 by Corwin Press, Inc.

Analysis of Teacher Career Cycle

Researchers affirm that teacher development throughout their careers is not guaranteed nor is it based solely on their years of experience (Lynn, 2002; Steffy et al., 2000). Years of experience do not suffice in promoting a teacher through higher stages of each model. Various factors are considered to impact a teacher's progress or stagnancy and can be narrowed down to professional and personal dynamics (Lynn, 2002; Steffy et al., 2000). Professionally, support, encouragement, and professional development promote teacher development (Lynn, 2002; Steffy et al., 2000). Preservice preparation and experiences are recognized as influential factors in initial progress for novice teachers (Lynn, 2002; Steffy et al., 2000). Additionally, Steffy et al. (2000) acknowledge that post retirement roles in education ensure that professionals continue developing after retiring from teaching.

Through a critical lens, it can be argued that teachers that view themselves as intellectuals will continue progressing and developing as professionals throughout their careers, motivated internally by the needs, strengths, and contexts of the students that they serve (Bryk, 2015; Giroux, 1988). In contrast, teachers that view themselves as technicians may experience stagnancy due to their dependency on motivational factors outside of their classroom, such as curriculum, assessments, and evaluations (Giroux, 2010).

Missing from existent literature on teacher career cycles are the effects of serving in urban schools and whether or not teacher career cycles tend to follow similar models in urban contexts as they do in general settings. Given that effective urban teachers should develop their practice in accordance with their students' needs, urban schoolteachers may require an

intellectual ideology to support them in their progression through the teacher career stages (Giroux, 1988).

Understanding that in the teacher career cycle I am specifically focused on the stages experience by veteran teachers, in the following section I will review research specific to two main characteristics of veteran teachers, which will provide further insight into the experiences of veteran urban educators.

Characteristics of Veteran Teachers

Literature has not shared a common definition of veteran teachers. Depending on the researcher, criteria for veterancy ranges from three to over twenty years of experience. Many researchers also use the terms veteran, experienced, and expert interchangeably. For the purpose of this study, I defined veterancy strictly based on a teacher's years of experience within a classroom setting and differentiate veterancy from effectiveness; therefore, a veteran teacher is not necessarily an effective teacher.

The U.S. Department of Education (2018) reported that the current K-12 public teacher workforce, including charter and traditional public schools, consists of 3.8 million educators. The breakdown of years of classroom experience amongst these teachers is 9% less than three years, 28% three to nine years, 40% ten to twenty years, and 23% twenty or more years (NCES, 2020). Urban teacher data was not included in this report because the reporting standards for this demographic were not met. Research shows that teachers with at least ten years of experience demonstrate significantly greater impacts on student achievement than teachers with less than ten years of experience (Rockoff, 2003). Based on this research, I defined a veteran teacher as one

who has at least ten years of classroom experience. Given this definition 63% of teachers in the United States qualify as veterans (NCES, 2020).

In this section I will present the two main characteristics that are highlighted in research focused on veteran teachers, which are veteran teachers' resistance to change and veteran teachers' resistance to plateauing. One of these characteristics supports veteran teacher effectiveness and the other does not.

Veteran Teachers' Resistance to Change

Given existent research, veteran teachers have the possibility of being highly effective because their years of experience in the classroom have equipped them with a wealth of knowledge and a solid instructional toolbelt (Rockoff, 2003). However, as previously stated, this outcome is not guaranteed as some teachers enter the career frustration stage (Day & Gu, 2009; Lynn, 2002). A prevalent theme of research on veteran teachers focuses on their resistance to change and their plateauing, or stall in their professional growth. Inevitably, with more years in the classroom, veteran teachers witness a plentitude of initiatives and changes in education.

Snyder (2017) argued that resistance is based on perspective. Behaviors that change agents perceive as resistant may be intentional efforts by workers to preserve the culture and vision of an organization (Snyder, 2017). Day and Gu (2009) found that teachers with 24-30 years of experience demonstrated deteriorating commitment to the profession due to new external policies and initiatives. Based on interviews with veteran teachers with a minimum of 20 years of experience, Snyder (2017) concluded that teachers exhibit resistance to change for three reasons, social nostalgia, political nostalgia, and to protect psychic rewards. Social nostalgia causes veteran teachers to resist changes that impact their relationships with students

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and colleagues, such as the increased focus on standardized tests, while political nostalgia "arises from a loss of autonomy stemming from mandated, top-down initiatives" (Snyder, 2017, p. 5). When teachers feel that their psychic rewards are threatened, they become defensive in an attempt to protect the intrinsic motivators that have maintained their commitment to the profession (Snyder, 2017). Snyder (2017) stated that not all veteran teachers respond to change in the same manner; however, most express a desire to participate in authentic dialogue around the implementation of new initiatives.

When veteran teachers resist change, they impede themselves from progressing professionally, which leads to plateauing and ineffective instructional practices (Lynn, 2002). On the other hand, some veteran teachers are able to embrace change and, therefore, resist plateauing to continue their professional growth (Meister & Ahrens, 2011).

Veteran Teachers' Resistance to Plateauing

Veteran teachers that are able to counteract the negative effects of change and long tenure possess distinct qualities that maintain their enthusiasm and commitment, leading to continued professional growth. They are resilient when facing challenges, have high levels of self-efficacy, maintain work-life balance, and develop strong personal and professional networks to resist plateauing (Lynn, 2002; Meister & Ahrens, 2011). The career frustration stage and the career stability stage exhibit signs of teacher plateauing, including frustration, disillusionment, stagnation, and sense of routine (Lynn, 2002; Meister & Ahrens, 2011). Supports must be in place to help teachers develop skills that will assist them in embracing change and resisting plateauing (Meister & Ahrens, 2011; Snyder, 2017).

Veteran teachers that successfully resist plateauing continue developing as professionals throughout their careers, thus growing their practice to be more effective practitioners (Giroux, 1988; Meister & Ahrens, 2011).

Analysis of Veteran Teacher Characteristics

Veteran teachers benefit from viewing themselves as intellectuals who have a need to continuously develop their practice in order to sustain longevity (Giroux, 1988). Veteran teachers must overcome the many challenges that come with consistent change throughout a long career (Meister & Ahrens, 2011). Overcoming these challenges is especially important considering that veteran teachers have the potential to impact greater positive change in the lives of students than novice teachers (Rockoff, 2003). Given teacher career cycle models, effectiveness is not a determined stage or state of being, but a process of continuous professional development that develops at various rates (Lynn, 2002; Steffy & Wolfe, 2001). In order to support effectiveness through veterancy, teachers must continue professional growth, embrace change, and resist plateauing throughout their careers. Critical thinking and reflection are required for this development to take place; therefore, teachers must perceive themselves as intellectual, professional experts (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Giroux, 1988). In contrast, veteran teachers that resist change will be ineffective as they plateau in their professional progress.

There is scarcity in the existent literature on veteran teachers in urban schools, even though urban teachers comprise one third of the workforce (NCES, 2020). In order to employ effective practices in urban schools, these veteran urban teachers may have unique experiences that support them in overcoming the distinct changes and challenges of an urban context.

In the following section, I will review literature that identifies the knowledge, skills, and practices of effective teachers in general and in urban school settings in an effort to better understand what types of teachers can help improve outcomes for urban youth.

Effective Teachers

Research has demonstrated that teachers have the greatest influence on student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Wright et al., 1997). In an analysis of state policies and state achievement scores, Darling-Hammond (2000) found that teacher quality and preparedness had a greater influence on students' academic performance than student demographics, class size, curriculum, and state spending. Through their analysis of student achievement data for five subject areas in grades three through five, Wright et al. (1997) concluded that "effective teachers appear to be effective with students of all achievement levels" (p. 63). Although neither study identified their participants as being in urban school settings, these results demonstrate that effective teaching leads to increased student achievement, regardless of student demographics or achievement levels. This section will review literature on the characteristics of effective teachers in general contexts and effective teachers in urban school settings.

Characteristics of Effective Teachers in General Settings

Effective teachers are critical to positive student outcomes but identifying what constitutes an effective teacher is dependent on context. Various researchers have identified numerous skills, knowledge, and personal dispositions that all effective teachers possess.

Effective teachers have several skills and dispositions. Prerequisites for effective teaching include strong communication skills, content knowledge, educational coursework, and certification (Stronge, 2007). These qualities and experiences are developed in teacher

preparation programs. Once in the classroom, planning and organization skills for instruction are crucial (Stronge, 2007). Implementing classroom management practices, such as establishing routines, considering classroom arrangement, and applying consistent discipline, also impact student outcomes (Stronge, 2007). Most of these skills can be cultivated.

There are also personal dispositions that effective teachers exhibit. These teachers are motivated, positive, reflective, fair, and respectful (Stronge, 2007). Consequently, they connect with students on a personal level, develop positive relationships with students and families, and encourage students to be responsible (Stronge, 2007; Stronge et al., 2011). Herman et al. (2018) found two additional characteristics that impact effectiveness. In their study, they discovered that that all teachers reported high levels of stress; however, teachers that reported high levels of self-efficacy and coping were well adjusted to the demands of teaching and produced higher student achievement results (Herman et al., 2018). Thus, self-efficacy and coping skills are two additional factors that promote teacher effectiveness.

Teachers must possess a variety of skills, attributes, and knowledge to effectively impact student achievement in general school settings. However, in urban schools, teachers would be ineffective if they only possessed the aforementioned qualities (Haberman, 1994). Urban school contexts require teachers to possess additional knowledge, skills, and dispositions in order to be effective with urban youth.

Effective Teachers in Urban Schools

A cookie cutter approach to educating all students, regardless of demographics, is ineffective, especially considering the diverse needs of students in urban settings (Haberman, 1994). Irvine (2003) argued that one of the reasons why the academic achievement gap exists for

urban youth is because teachers fail to make adequate connections between content instruction and students' prior knowledge, linguistic skills, and cultural experiences. There is a wealth of evidence demonstrating that urban teachers must be responsive to students' cultural backgrounds (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Hollins, 2019; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2017; Robinson & Lewis, 2017) and linguistical needs (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Hollins, 2019; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Irvine, 2003; Paris & Alim, 2017) in order to be effective.

Given the diverse backgrounds and needs of urban students, teachers who solely exhibit the qualities of effective teachers in general school settings are not as successful in urban contexts (Haberman, 1994). Teachers in urban schools must possess more than the basics. Haberman (1994) argued that on top of effective instructional practice, a teacher's ideology and commitment to diverse students is critical. This section will address the existent literature specific to effective teachers in urban schools.

Typologies of Effective Teachers in Urban Schools

Robinson and Lewis (2017) constructed six typologies of effective urban educators based on their interviews with teachers. Although their sample size only consisted of nine teachers, their findings correlated with that of prior research studies. These typologies describe the ideologies of effective urban teachers. Table 3 identifies these six typologies.

Table 3

Typologies and Characteristics of Effective Teachers in Urban Schools

Typology	Characteristics
Anti-Deficit	Look for the best in students
Cultural Pedagogue	Integrates cultural background
Love	Develop a safe and loving classroom culture
Conductor/Coach	Personal and shared responsibility for student success
Warm Demander	Compliment high expectations with interpersonal relationships
Golden Ruler	Commitment to excellence and equity

Note. Adapted from "Typologies for Effectiveness: Characteristics of Effective Teachers in Urban Learning Environments" by D. Robinson & C. W. Lewis, 2017, *Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research, 13*, 124-134. Copyright 2017 by Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research.

Although each typology is distinguished, effective urban educators often demonstrate characteristics from several of these categories (Robinson & Lewis, 2017). The anti-deficit teacher looks for the best in his or her students and adopts an asset-based approach to working with students and families, while the love typology focuses on creating a safe and loving classroom culture (Robinson & Lewis, 2017). The cultural pedagogue integrates students' cultural backgrounds into instruction to increase student engagement and build upon common background knowledge (Robinson & Lewis, 2017). The warm demander has high student expectations but combines them with strong interpersonal relationships (Robinson & Lewis, 2017). Similarly, the conductor/coach develops relationships and partnerships with students, families, and the community to promote personal and shared responsibility for student success (Robinson & Lewis, 2017). The golden ruler maintains similar expectations and efforts with their students as with their loved ones, thus demonstrating their commitment to equity and excellence for all children (Robinson & Lewis, 2017).

In comparison to the characteristics of effective teachers in general school settings, the six typologies of effective urban teachers require a stronger ideological foundation specific to diverse students; however, there is overlap to a certain degree. Stronge (2007) and Stronge et al. (2011) also identified the importance of connecting with students on a personal level, developing positive relationships, and encouraging student responsibility. Nevertheless, in urban education these practices require genuine commitment to serving students from diverse backgrounds and, therefore, are not identical to those of general effective teachers (Haberman, 1994).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogues

Culturally relevant pedagogy is a comprehensive, student-centered approach to teaching all students regardless of their background by connecting schooling to culture (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995). This pedagogical approach aims to address the achievement and behavioral gap that is present for students from marginalized communities by ensuring that students experience academic success, develop or maintain cultural competence, and develop a critical consciousness (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995). The five principles of culturally relevant pedagogy, as shown in Figure 3, are identity and achievement, equity and excellence, developmental appropriateness, teaching the whole child, and student-teacher relationships (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

Figure 3

The Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Identity & Achievement

- Identity development
- Cultural heritage
- Multiple perspectives
- Affirmation of diversity
- Public validation of home-community cultures

Equity & Excellence

- Dispositions
- Incorporate multicultural curriculum content
- Equal access
- High expectations for all

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Developmental Appropriateness

- Learning styles
- Teaching styles
- Cultural variation in psychological needs
  - Motivation
  - Morale
  - Engagement
  - Collaboration

Teaching Whole Child

- Skill development in cultural context
- Bridge home, school and community
- Learning outcomes
- Supportive learning community
- Empower students

Student - Teacher Relationships

- Caring
- Relationships
- Interaction
- Classroom atmosphere

Note. Adapted from "Toward a Conceptual Framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: An Overview of the Conceptual and Theoretical Literature" by S. Brown-Jeffy and J. E. Cooper, 2011, *Teacher Education Quarterly, 38*(1), 65–84. Copyright 2011 by Caddo Gap Press.

Urban schoolteachers who are culturally relevant pedagogues produce improved results for urban students by adopting these five principles (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2010). These teachers build positive relationships with their students through the cultural connections that they create and the sensitivity they have to addressing urban students' comprehensive needs, including those that involve their home life and community (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Students taught by culturally relevant pedagogues tend to have increased motivation and engagement in their learning (Borrero & Yeh, 2011). Additionally, teachers that employ culturally relevant practices strengthen students' racial and ethnic identities and their sense of belonging, which in turn increases academic outcomes (Byrd, 2016; Borrero & Yeh, 2011; Rodríguez et al., 2004).

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogues

Culturally sustaining pedagogy was informed by decades' worth of asset-based pedagogical research (Paris & Alim, 2017). It directly builds upon culturally relevant pedagogy; however, the goal of culturally sustaining pedagogy is not just to develop instruction that is relevant to students' cultures but to implement instruction that maintains students' cultural and linguistic pluralism by building upon student strengths (Paris & Alim, 2017). This pedagogical model has five elements, as shown on Figure 4, which include (a) critical centering on community languages, practices, and knowledges, (b) student and community agency and input, (c) historicized cultural and linguistic content and instruction, (d) capacity to contend with internalized oppressions, and (e) an ability to curricularize these elements (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Figure 4

The Elements of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy
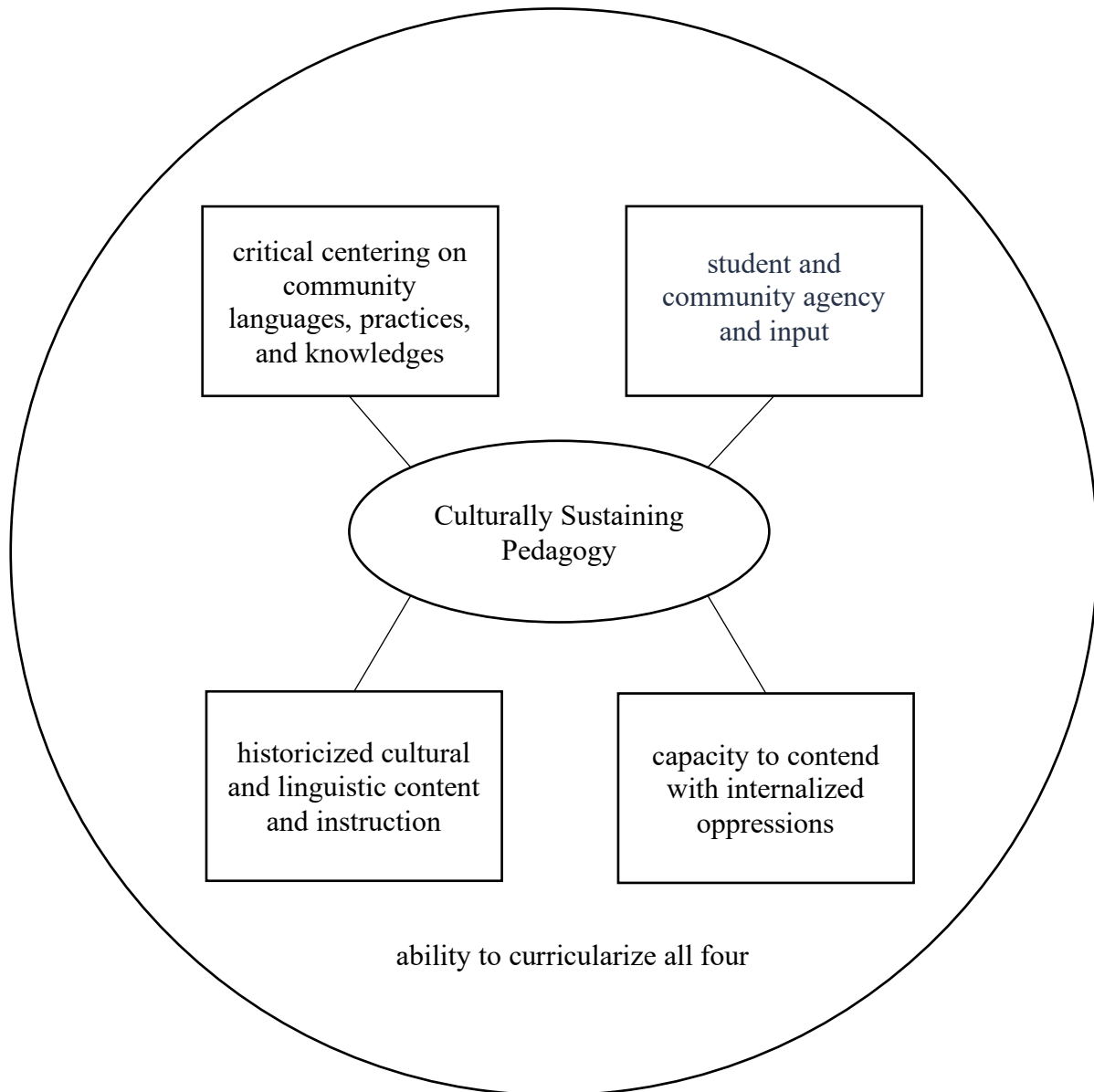
The diagram shows a large circle containing four rectangular boxes surrounding a central oval labeled "Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy." The boxes are connected to the central oval by lines.

- Top left box: critical centering on community languages, practices, and knowledges
- Top right box: student and community agency and input
- Center oval: Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy
- Bottom left box: historicized cultural and linguistic content and instruction
- Bottom right box: capacity to contend with internalized oppressions
- At the bottom inside the circle: ability to curricularize all four

Teachers that are culturally sustaining pedagogues implement the five elements of this

pedagogical framework. Culturally sustaining pedagogues must view themselves as intellectuals.

This pedagogical model requires educators to connect with students', families', and communities' cultural and linguistic experiences and develop meaningful curriculum that values and sustains these practices, which requires intellectual reflection and practice (Giroux, 1988; Paris & Alim, 2017). Culturally sustaining teachers are effective educators in urban school contexts as a result of these efforts (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Analysis of Effective Teachers in Urban Schools

In comparison to the characteristics of effective teachers in general school settings, urban teachers require a stronger ideological foundation specific to diverse students; however, there is overlap to a certain degree. Stronge (2007) and Stronge et al. (2011) also identified the importance of connecting with students on a personal level, developing positive relationships, and encouraging student responsibility. Additionally, teachers that employ a critical pedagogical framework, such as culturally relevant pedagogy or culturally sustaining pedagogy, demonstrate high levels of effectiveness with urban youth (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2010; Paris & Alim, 2017). Overall, in urban education these practices require genuine commitment to serving students from diverse backgrounds and, therefore, are not identical to those of general effective teachers (Haberman, 1994).

Teachers in urban school settings must have a strong commitment to serving urban youth to be effective (Haberman, 1994). Urban teachers must also be able to build strong connections with students' and their families to be effective (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Noguera, 2009; Paris & Alim, 2017). Additionally, effective urban teachers should understand students' local community and families in order to center instruction on the community languages, cultures, and knowledge (Hollins, 2019; Paris & Alim, 2017). Effective

urban teachers understand that they are in service to the community; therefore, they must be open

to critical dialogue with students and families in order to best meet their educational desires

(Paris & Alim, 2017).

Adopting culturally sustaining pedagogy demonstrates teachers' commitment to serving

students of diverse backgrounds. It empowers urban teachers to incorporate various

aforementioned aspects of effective urban teaching through a critical lens. In order for teachers

to adopt such a lens, however, they must view themselves as intellectual professionals who have

the ability to critique instruction in order to make decisions based on their students' academic,

linguistic, and cultural needs (Giroux, 1988). Consequently, the theoretical framework for this

dissertation was based on these two frameworks. As shown in Figure 5, this study used teachers

as intellectuals as a foundational framework that leads to the implementation of elements from

culturally sustaining pedagogy.

Figure 5

Theoretical Frameworks
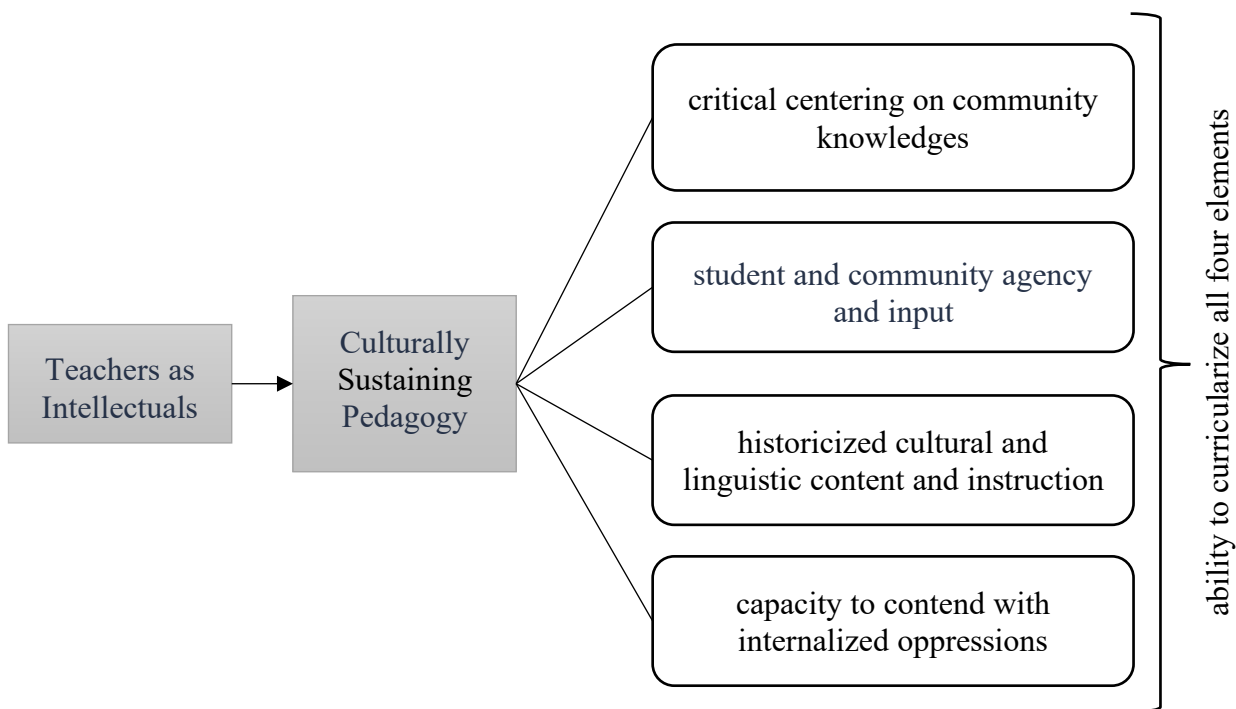
Note. Adapted from *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World*, by D. Paris and H. S. Alim, 2017, copyright 2017 by Teachers College Press; from *Ideology, Culture and the Process of Schooling*, by H. A. Giroux, 1981, Temple University Press, copyright 1981 by Temple University Press; from *Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning,* by H. A. Giroux, 1988, Bergin & Garvey, copyright 1988 by Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc.

Urban teachers must view themselves as intellectuals in order to be responsive to the diverse needs of their students. Intellectualism is essential for teachers who view themselves as culturally sustaining pedagogues since they cannot implement the elements of culturally sustaining pedagogy without critical reflection. In the next section, I will discuss the importance of teachers of color in urban schools and describe how they impact urban youth.

Teachers of Color

Research demonstrates that teachers of color have positive impacts on students of all demographics, including students of color. The current teacher workforce, however, lacks diversity and is not representative of the student population (NCES, 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). In this section, I will present data on the teacher workforce and provide an explanation for the lack of diversity. Then, I will describe the impacts that teachers of color have on their students.

Representation Gap in the Teacher Workforce

Despite students of color composing over 50% of the student population in U.S. public schools, teachers of color only comprise 21% of the workforce (NCES, 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). This is a result of the aforementioned opportunity gap experienced by students of color. In consequence, diversity diminishes at various key points along the teacher pipeline workforce (NCES, 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Figure 6 identifies these key points.

Figure 6

Key Points Along Teacher Pipeline in Which Diversity Diminishes
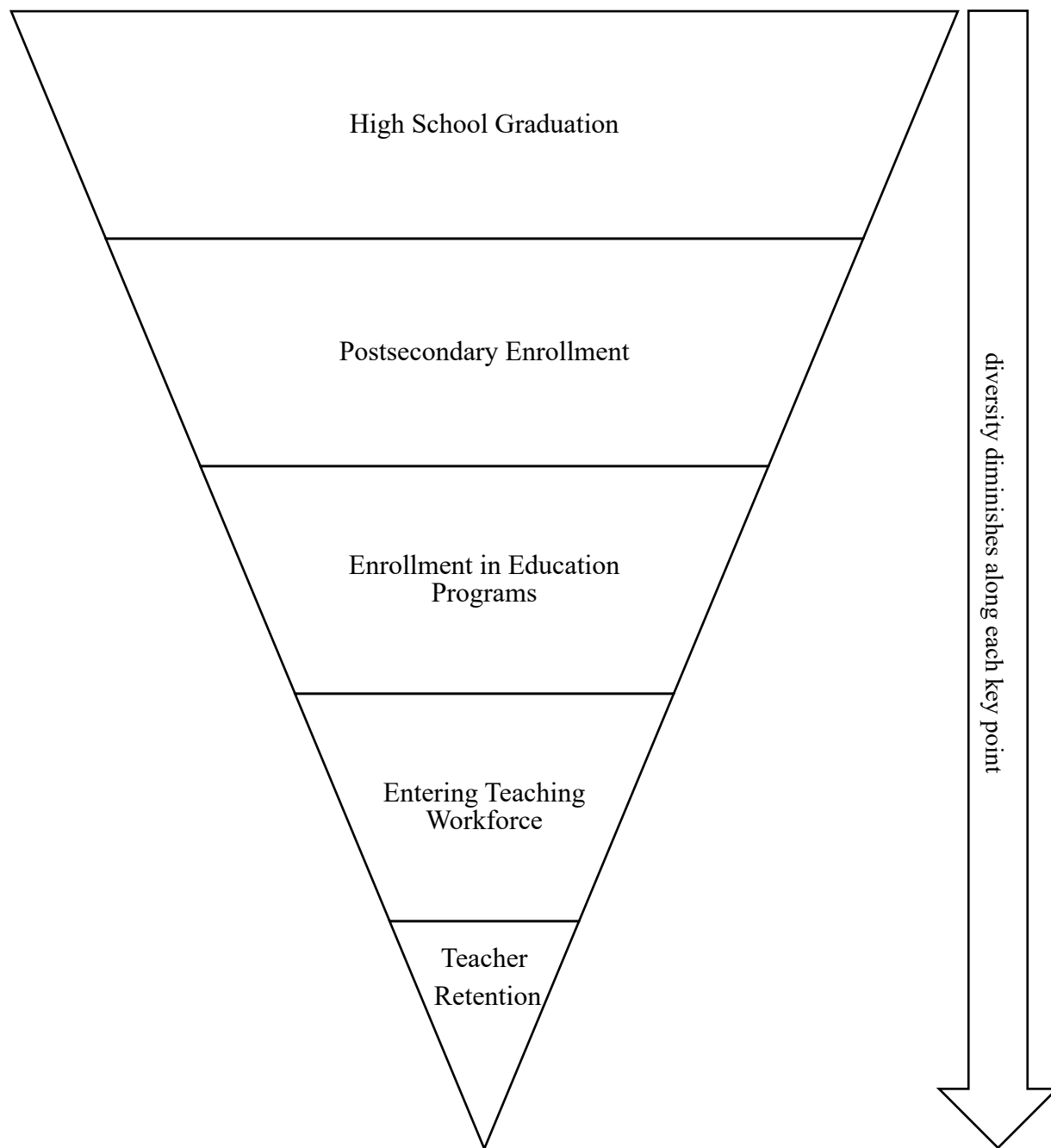
Note: This figure was adapted from "The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce" by U.S. Department of Education, 2016. Copyright 2016 by U.S. Department of Education.

The high school graduation rates are lower amongst Black (92%), Hispanic/Latino (89%), Pacific Islander (84%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (75%) students as compared to White (94%) and Asian (97%) students (NCES, 2020). This means that students of color are less likely to have the opportunity to enroll in postsecondary schooling. Analyzing postsecondary enrollment data demonstrates similar trends, with most students of color, with the exception of Asian students, enrolling at a rate of less than 40% (NCES). Following postsecondary enrollment, less students of color enroll in education programs and complete these programs, which means that the pool of teacher candidates becomes more homogenous (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Further, even when teachers of color successfully enter the workforce, they have a lower retention rate compared to White teachers (Emmanuel, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). This leads to a representation gap where student demographics are not similarly represented in teacher demographics.

Looking specifically at Latina/o teachers, they compose 9% of the workforce, even though Latina/o students are 25% of the student population (NCES, 2020). Following similar trends to the nation's overall population changes, Latina/o teachers are the fastest growing demographic in the workforce (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015). However, Latina/o teachers, along with Black teachers, are also leaving the profession at a higher rate than other demographics (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015). This attrition contributes to the continued scarcity of Latina/o teachers in the workforce and the representation gap that leaves Latina/o students without educators who resemble them.

Impacts of Teachers of Color on Urban Students

Existent literature argues that teachers of color have a positive impact on urban student outcomes for multiple reasons (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Noguera, 2009; Sleeter et al., 2015). Teachers that share a similar cultural and linguistic background with their urban students demonstrate increased student achievement results, graduation rates, and college attendance rates because their identities are aligned with those of their students (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Noguera, 2009). These teachers have an advantage when serving in urban schools because they tend to be more mindful and aware of the social political contexts of education in urban communities and, consequently, incorporate culturally and linguistically relevant instruction in the classroom more frequently than White teachers (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Irvine, 2003). These teachers also tend to have higher expectations of minority students and implement additive practices (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). Additionally, bilingual teachers particularly benefit emergent bilinguals due to their increased use of students' first language to make connections and clarifications that benefit content learning (Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 2010). Teachers of color tend to have an experiential understanding of the needs of urban youth and an innate commitment to these communities; therefore, they are able to build strong connections with urban students which result in improved outcomes (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Noguera, 2009).

Aside from advancing urban student learning directly, teachers of color are also better able to support parents and families due to their cultural and linguistic connections (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Irvine, 2003). These teachers also advance schools' overall progress in serving urban

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youth because tend to advocate for equitable practices, challenge stereotypes, and positively influence school action plans (Irvine, 2003; Ross et al., 2015; Sleeter et al., 2015).

Impacts of Latina/o Teachers on Urban Students

Considering that Latinos are already the largest minority group in the United States and represent the fastest growing demographic, it is important to note the impact of Latina/o teachers (Irizarry, 2016). Latina/o students demonstrate significantly higher academic outcomes when they are taught by Latina/o teachers in comparison to when they are taught by teachers who do not share their ethnic background (Clewell et al., 2001). Latina/o teachers positively impact outcomes for Latina/o students in other ways as well. Latina/o students' enrollment in gifted courses and graduation rates increase when taught by Latina/o teachers (Meire, 1993). There is also a decrease in inequitable discipline implementation practices and a decrease school dropout rates for Latina/o students when they are served by Latina/o teachers (Fraga et al., 1986; Meire, 1993).

Latina/o teachers produce improved outcomes for Latina/o students due to several practices. Latina/o teachers tend to have higher expectations of their Latina/o students and, consequently, as research demonstrates, these expectations increase student academic performance (Dee, 2004). These teachers are also more likely to implement culturally relevant practices which increase student engagement (Flores, 2017). Latina/o teachers are also successful in developing strong relationships with students and their families due to their shared ethnic and linguistic backgrounds (Darder, 1993; Nieto, 1994; Rueda et al., 2004). Finally, Latina/o teachers often serve as cultural advocates and cultural guardians for Latina/o students (García-Nevarez et al., 2005). Further, Flores (2017) explained the term "cultural guardians" as the conception that

Latina teachers "consciously deploy a range of sanctioned and unsanctioned strategies in order to protect and help children they see as sharing their cultural roots" (p. 65).

Analysis of Teachers of Color

Teachers of color are critical to the success of our urban schools due to the positive impacts that they have on students from diverse backgrounds (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Noguera, 2009; Sleeter et al., 2015). Teachers of color have an experiential understanding of urban students' language and culture (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Noguera, 2009). As students are learning new concepts, teachers of color are better equipped to make cultural and linguistic connections to students' prior knowledge in order to support them in making sense of new concepts. This gives teachers of color an advantage in serving in urban communities as they are equipped to provide critical and culturally sustaining instruction based on their own experiences and the cultural connections they have with students and their families. Consequently, this promotes student engagement, strong relationships with students and families, and improved outcomes for students (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Irvine, 2003; Noguera, 2009; Paris & Alim, 2017). For these reasons, the representation gap between students of color and the teachers who serve them should be addressed.

As the Latina/o student population continues growing at a higher rate than other minority populations, it is important to consider the representation gap for this particular demographic (Irizarry, 2016). Latina/o teachers improve the educational experience for Latina/o students in numerous ways, including decreasing inequitable discipline implementation practices, implementing culturally sustaining practices in the classroom, advocating for student needs within their school system, and providing mentorship and support in navigating the education

system. Consequently, this leads to improved student engagement, increased academic achievement, decreased dropout rates, and increased graduation rates for Latina/o students.

Gendered Identities

The teaching profession has been feminized by society leading to an overrepresentation of women in the teacher workforce (Goldstein, 2014). Women are viewed as caretakers and have historically been a source of cheap labor in our society (Goldstein). This has inevitably led more women into professions like teaching (Goldstein). Consequently, women currently constitute 76% of the teacher workforce overall (NCES, 2020). At the elementary school level that percentage increases with women representing 89% of the teacher workforce in comparison to 64% at the secondary level (NCES).

Conclusion

Maintaining or increasing effectiveness from induction to retirement is not guaranteed. Teacher career cycle models categorize changes in teachers' trajectories and conclude that personal factors, organizational environment factors, and reflective practices influence teacher progression (Lynn, 2002; Steffy & Wolfe, 2001). Veteran teachers can maintain effectiveness by embracing change and resisting plateauing through various personal and professional practices (Meister & Ahrens, 2011; Snyder, 2017).

Research on the qualities of effective teachers in general settings (Herman et al., 2018; Stronge, 2007), on the characteristics of effective teachers in urban schools (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Giroux, 1988; Haberman, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2010; Paris & Alim, 2017; Robinson & Lewis, 2017), and on the career development of veteran teachers in general settings (Lynn, 2002; Meister & Ahrens, 2011; Snyder, 2017) has been conducted. These

studies indicated that effective teachers in general settings and in urban settings share the same knowledge, skills, and practices to a certain extent (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, Herman et al., 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2010; Stronge, 2007). However, effective urban teachers have a strong ideological commitment to serving in urban settings and employ practices that meet the specific linguistic and cultural strengths and needs of urban youth (Haberman, 1994; Hollins, 2019; Nieto, 2010; Paris & Alim, 2017; Robinson & Lewis, 2017).

The distinct experiences of effective veteran teachers in urban schools are sparse and can only be slightly informed by the vast amount of literature on effective teachers in general settings. Effective teachers in general settings demonstrate various skills, knowledge, and personal attributes in order to positively impact their students. These include strong communication abilities, organization, classroom management, content knowledge, formal preparation, self-efficacy, and coping skills (Hattie, 2008; Herman et al., 2018; Stronge, 2007). As teachers progress through their career, they face various challenges and opportunities. Their ability to handle these challenges and opportunities determines whether they continue in their professional growth or remain stagnant and, consequently, impacts their effectiveness (Lynn, 2002; Steffy & Wolfe, 2001). Urban teachers, however, face additional challenges at various stages of their careers. These challenges are unique to their contexts; therefore, they require teachers to have additional knowledge and skills in order to be effective urban student educators (Carnoy & García, 2017; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Duncan et al., 1994; Noguera, 2003). Veteran teachers in general settings that successfully resist plateauing, or stagnancy, have various characteristics that support them in overcoming challenges often faced by teachers with a long tenure (Meister & Ahrens, 2011; Snyder, 2017).

Existing research demonstrates that teachers of color have positive impacts on urban students. This is due to various reasons, including having a shared linguistic and cultural background, an increased awareness of urban communities, a stronger ability to incorporate culturally and linguistically relevant instruction, and an experiential understanding of urban students, especially those of Latina/o backgrounds (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012; Irvine, 2003; Noguera, 2009). These factors result in increased academic results, graduation rates, and college attendance rates (Clewell et al., 2001; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Meire, 1993; Noguera, 2009). Additionally, there is a decrease in inequitable discipline implementation practices and dropout rates for urban students when they have teachers who share their cultural identity (Fraga et al., 1986; Meire, 1993). However, despite the richness of the literature on these various topics, there is minimal literature that explores the distinct experiences of Latina teachers who have served in urban schools throughout their careers and have reached veterancy. Given the high rate of attrition for Latina teachers, the increasing Latina/o student population across the nation, and the potential impact that Latina teachers could have on our most vulnerable student populations, it is imperative to understand how to sustain Latina veteran urban teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2007; NCES, 2020; Nieto, 2010; Noguera, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Additionally, our urban schools are currently failing to meet the needs of our urban students, as evidenced by the opportunity gap.

The existing literature in this chapter guided the development and execution of this research study. This study drew from four major topics in existent literature, which include intellectualism, culturally sustaining pedagogy, effective teachers, and veteran teachers' career cycles. The four literature topics informed the methodology that was developed and provided the

lens for data analysis. Additionally, a combination of two frameworks, teachers as intellectuals and culturally sustaining pedagogy, was used to establish the theoretical framework for this study.

To supplement existing research and begin filling the gap on this topic, this study was guided by the following research question:

What are the personal and professional factors that sustain Latina veteran urban teachers?

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

As public schools in the United States continue to experience demographic shifts in their student populations, making them more diverse than ever, it is imperative that the opportunity gap in our education system is addressed in order to provide a more equitable education for our urban students (Carnoy & García, 2017; Gregory et al., 2010; NCES, 2020). Existing research shows that teachers are the single most influential factor in student achievement and teachers with at least ten years of experience produce better outcomes for students of all demographics than novice teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Rockoff, 2003; Wright et al., 1997). For these reasons, urban students deserve effective, experienced teachers to help close the gap; however, urban schools experience a higher teacher turnover rate, resulting in a higher concentration of novice teachers in comparison to nonurban settings (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012; NCES, 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2018). This teacher turnover is a result of the high risk of stress and burnout that teachers in urban schools experience (Noguera, 2009). Therefore, urban students, who have the highest academic, linguistic, and social emotional needs, are not only being served by teachers who are not equipped to meet their distinct needs, but also who are predominantly new to the profession (Gagnon & Mattingly. 2012; Noguera, 2009).

When considering the specific impacts of teachers of color on urban students, research demonstrates that they have a positive impact on student academic results due to their shared cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 2010; Noguera, 2009). Latina/o teachers, specifically, are able to provide more culturally and linguistically relevant instruction to their Latina/o students, which consequently improves urban students'

schooling experiences and produces improved learning outcomes (Flores, 2017; Ingersoll &

May, 2011; Noguera, 2009). Within the teacher workforce, however, the retention rate of

Latina/o teachers is lower than that of White teachers (Emmanuel, 2018; U.S. Department of

Education, 2016). With the understanding that Latina/o teachers have such positive impacts on

urban students, it is critical to work towards the long-term sustaining and retaining of Latina/o

teachers.

The purpose of this study was to explore what sustains Latina veteran urban teachers

throughout their tenure within a predominantly Latina/o elementary school district. This chapter

serves to explain the research design and methodology that was used to fulfill this purpose. It

begins by reviewing the research question of the study. Then a section describing the research

design is presented. This study employed a phenomenological qualitative research design that

included the use of *testimonies*, or critical narratives. *Testimonios* were used to highlight the

voices and experiences of Latina veteran urban teachers, a teacher demographic that is often

missing from the mainstream narrative of effective teachers and educators as a whole (Delgado,

1989). The next section describes the methodology of the study, including the setting,

participants, data collection, and analysis. This study took place in River City Elementary School

Districts, a predominantly Latina/o urban school district. Six Latina veteran urban teachers

participated in the study through the submission of a survey, submission of instructional

documents, and participation in a series of three interviews. These three sources of data

collection supported triangulation of the data. The data analysis procedures included developing

the *testimonios* and a cross-case analysis. Finally, the validity of the research design and

instrumentation is established at the end of this chapter.

Research Question

This chapter will describe how a qualitative design answers the research question that guided this study:

What are the personal and professional factors that sustain Latina veteran urban teachers?

This question allowed the experiences of the participants to be elevated in guiding the study. The perspectives of the participants then provided their individual testimonies and shaped the findings by developing a collective account of their lived-in experiences.

Research Design

A qualitative research design was implemented to answer the guiding question for this phenomenological study. *Testimonios* were developed as a culturally relevant methodology in order to highlight Latina veteran urban teachers' unique stories and to contribute these stories to the mainstream narrative of veteran urban teachers.

Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research seeks to discover meaning of a specific context through the perspective of participants who regularly experience the phenomena that is being studied (Creswell, 2014). The goal of qualitative research is not for the researcher to bring meaning to the issue being studied, but for the researcher to discover the complex meaning that participants have around the issue (Creswell, 2014). The centrality of meaning lies within the participants' understandings on the issue being investigated, which is what factors sustain Latina veteran urban teachers throughout their careers.

The purpose of this study was to explore what factors sustain Latina veteran urban teachers in a primarily Latina/o elementary school district. Using a qualitative approach enabled

me to understand the multifaceted perspectives of Latina veteran urban teachers, resulting in a holistic account of the phenomena that represents the participants' shared experiences (Seidman, 2006).

Phenomenological Research

Phenomenological research is defined as inquiry into a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Hatch, 2002). This study explored the phenomena of Latina veteran urban teachers by studying a group of individuals who are living this experience. Phenomenological research constructs meaning through the common experiences of participants with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009). A collective understanding of the phenomenon is developed through the individual perspectives of the participants (Creswell, 2013; Husserl, 1970). Phenomenological research enabled me to develop a deep understanding of Latina veteran urban teachers' experiences through their individual stories as well as their collective similarities.

Critical Narratives: *Testimonios*

Narrative research studies a phenomenon as told through the participants' firsthand accounts (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, critical narratives, such as *testimonios*, seek to tell the stories of individuals from marginalized groups in order to "challenge the status quo" (Delgado, 1989, p. 2414). In other words, critical narratives interject the stories of marginalized communities into the mainstream narrative of a phenomenon. *Testimonios* require participants to partake in critical reflection of their lived stories while building solidarity through shared experiences (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). The development of *testimonios* was a culturally relevant methodological approach which, consequently, established sacred spaces between participants and me during the interview process (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Diaz Soto et al.,

2009). Sacred spaces are a research method developed by Latina feminist researchers. Using *testimonios*, this study established sacred spaces, or physical and theoretical spaces that empower participants and researchers to have intimate critical conversations (Diaz Soto et al., 2009). The guiding research question for this study aimed to explore the individual stories of Latina veteran urban teachers in a predominantly Latina/o elementary school district.

Methodology

This section describes the methodology of the study, including the processes for selecting participants, collecting data, and analyzing the data. The methods of the study served to answer the guiding question. Various types of qualitative data collection were employed, including a survey, documents, and semi-structured interviews. These methods allowed for triangulation in data analysis.

Setting

River City Elementary School District is the pseudonym used for the elementary school district where this study took place. The district was located in Southern California and serves an urban student population of about 17,000 students in preschool through sixth grade throughout 24 elementary schools (CDE, 2020). Students in River City Elementary School District were primarily Hispanic/Latino (85.4%) and came from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds (84.4%) (CDE, 2020). Over half of the students were emergent bilinguals, which is an asset-based term used to describe students who are acquiring English skills in addition to maintaining their primary language (García et al., 2008). Table 4 includes a breakdown of student characteristics in this school district in percentages.

Table 4

Student Characteristics in River City Elementary School District in Percentages

Characteristic	Total
Foster youth	0.6
Homeless youth	9.8
Migrant education	0.1
Disabilities	12.3
Socioeconomically disadvantaged	84.4
Race/ethnicity	
White	4.8
Black	1.3
Hispanic/Latino	85.4
Asian	4.3
Filipino	1.4
Pacific Islander	0.3
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.1
Two or more races	0.9
Not reported	1.5
English language acquisition status	
English only	28.6
Initial fluent English proficient	3.4
Emergent bilingual	51.2
Reclassified fluent English proficient	16.7

Note. Adapted from "Data Quest," by California Department of Education, 2020. Copyright 2020 by California Department of Education.

Having a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of the student population in this district is necessary to know who the students are that participating teachers in this study worked with. The term "urban students" was used to by the participants and me throughout this study. Due to the demographics of this school district, the term "urban students" referred to Latina/o students who are predominantly from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

The teacher workforce at River City Elementary School District consisted of 861 teachers (CDE, 2020). Table 5 displays teacher characteristics in percentages for River City Elementary School District.

Table 5

Teacher Characteristics in River City Elementary School District in Percentages

Characteristic	Total
Female	789
Male	72
Race/ethnicity	
White	55.4
Black	0.9
Hispanic/Latino	29.8
Asian	8.8
Filipino	1.9
Pacific Islander	0.1
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.0
Two or more races	1.0
Not reported	2.0
Education level	
Baccalaureate degree	13.0
Baccalaureate degree +30	27.0
Master's degree	8.7
Master's degree +30	50.8
Doctorate	0.6

Note. Adapted from "Data Quest," by California Department of Education, 2020. Copyright 2020 by California Department of Education.

As demonstrated on this table, the average years of service amongst teachers was 13 years and 12 years within the district (CDE, 2020). About 10% of teachers were first year staff members and an additional 6.7% were second year staff members (CDE, 2020). The majority of

teachers in this district were Hispanic/Latino (29.8%) or White (55.4%) (CDE, 2020). Compared to teacher demographics across the nation, River City Elementary School District had a more diverse teacher workforce. The district also had a greater percentage of Hispanic/Latino teachers in comparison to the national percentage of 9% (NCES, 2020).

Participants and Selection Process

At the time of the study, I was an administrator at River City Elementary School District. This allowed me to gain access to this setting in order to select participants for this study by submitting a district Data Collection Approval for IRB form, which can be found in Appendix E. I selected participants through an application process and criterion sampling. Criterion sampling is defined as the selection of participants for a study who meet defined criteria (Leavy, 2017). These criteria included the following:

- **veteran teacher:** The teacher has at least ten years of teaching experience in an urban school (Rockoff, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

- **urban teacher:** The teacher currently serves in a school with a student population that is comprised of a majority of minority students and a majority of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, as identified by free and reduced lunch qualification (Eckert, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006; NCES, 2020; Noguera, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

- **culturally sustaining pedagogue:** The teacher employs culturally sustaining pedagogy as an instructional framework in order to meet the unique needs of urban students (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Based on these criteria, the recruitment, application, and selection process followed the steps identified in Figure 7.

Figure 7

Recruitment, Application, and Selection Process

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                    Recruitment                       │
│  Emailed all teachers with at least 10 years of      │
│                   experience                         │
│              Screening survey shared                 │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                Teacher Application                   │
│             Screening survey submitted               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                          ↓
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                Participant Selection                 │
│  Reviewed survey submissions to ensure criteria was  │
│                       met                            │
│              Selected four participants              │
│  Participants recommended additional two participants│
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```
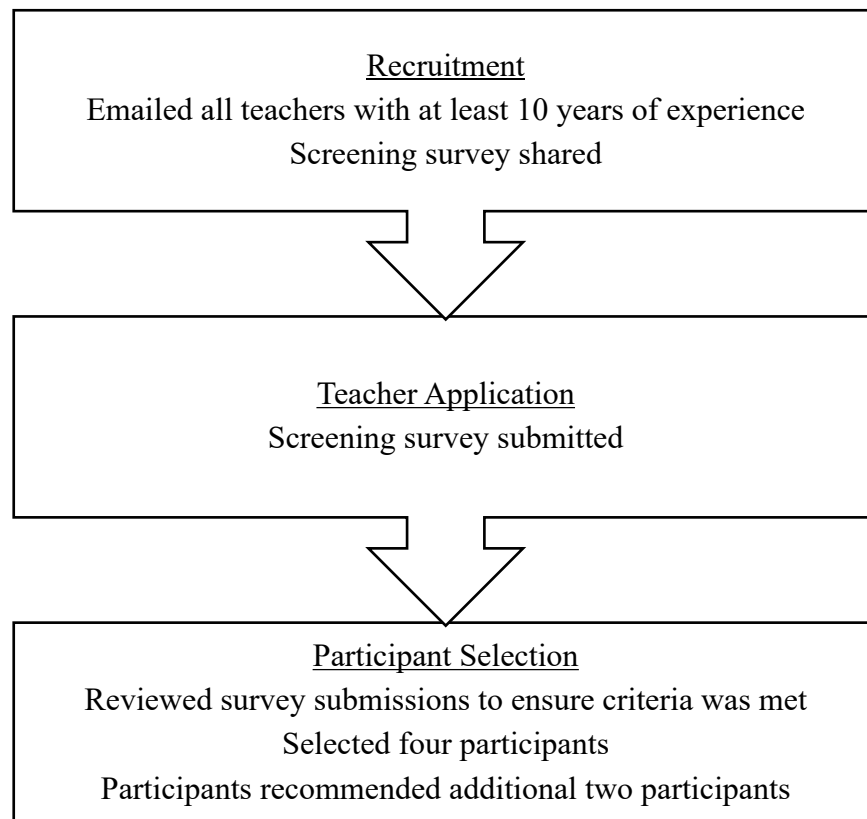
The first stage of identifying participants was the recruitment process. This entailed contacting the human resources department to obtain a list of veteran teachers, or teachers with a minimum of ten years of teaching experience at River City Elementary School District. The list contained a total of 464 teachers. All of these teachers were then contacted through email. The email provided a description of the study, the selection criteria, and a link to the screening survey. Appendix A contains the email that was sent to teachers.

The second stage of the process was the teacher application, which consisted of the submission of the screening survey. The survey can be found in Appendix B. It consisted of questions pertaining to the individual's demographics, professional history, and instructional practice. A total of 10 teachers submitted the survey, however, only four met the criteria for participation. These four teachers were emailed to confirm participation and to submit required documents. An additional two participants were recruited by the original four participants. These two new participants also completed the screening survey to ensure they met the criteria. At the end of the selection process, I realized that all participants were unintentionally Latinas. This shifted the focus of the study to Latina veteran urban teachers.

The six participants selected are a sample of the River City Elementary School District's Latina veteran urban teacher population. Participant names were replaced by pseudonyms to maintain anonymity and data was kept confidential. Table 6 includes a list of the participants and their professional characteristics.

Table 6

Participants Professional Characteristics

Name	Years of Teaching Experience	Education Level	Certifications	Current Teaching Assignment
Bella	12	Masters	BCLAD	6th
Carmen	17	Masters	GATE	4th, GATE
Clarissa	24	Masters	GATE	3rd
Maria de la Luz	15	Masters	BCLAD	1st, DLI
Paula	14	Masters	BCLAD	K, DLI
Penelope	14	Masters	BCLAD	4th

Note. Data collected from teacher demographics and screening survey.

Instrumentation

Three instruments were developed exclusively for the purpose of this study. The instruments included a survey, interview protocol, and field notes template.

Teacher Demographic and Screening Survey

The teacher demographic and screening survey collected contact information, demographic data, work history, and instructional practice information from each participant. The survey was also used to screen out participants based on their self-rating on the frequency of culturally sustaining pedagogical practices and descriptions of examples of their implementation of these practices. Some demographic data that was collected from each participant included their gender, age, ethnicity, years of teaching experience, and level of education. A sample question about their implementation of culturally sustaining pedagogy included, how often do you make connections to emergent bilinguals' primary languages during instruction? Appendix B includes the complete survey.

Three Semi-Structured Interview Series

Three semi-structured interviews were used to collect a majority of the qualitative data for this study. I created interview questions for each round of interviews guided by Seidman's (2006) three interview series and grounded on research-based constructs to ensure content validity.

Interview One: Life History Interview

Table 7 identifies the interview questions for the first interview and the construct and literature that they were based on. This first interview focused on the participant's life history in connection to becoming a veteran urban teacher that implements culturally sustaining pedagogy (Seidman, 2006).

Table 7

Life History Interview Questions and Research Based Constructs

Interview Questions	Constructs	Literature
1.1 How did you come to serve in an urban school?	Commitment to urban students	Haberman, 1994
1.2 Tell me about your students and their families.	Commitment to urban students	Haberman, 1994
	Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy	Paris & Alim, 2017
	Teachers as Intellectuals	Giroux, 1981, 1988
1.3 How was your own experience in school in comparison to your work now as an urban teacher?	Life history	Seidman, 2006
	Commitment to urban students	Haberman, 1994
	Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy	Paris & Alim, 2017
	Teacher Preparedness	Darling-Hammond, 2000
	Teachers as Intellectuals	Giroux, 1981, 1988
1.4 What has led you to remain in an urban school setting for over ten years?	Teacher career cycles	Lynn, 2002; Steffy, et al., 2000
	Urban teacher burnout	Darling-Hammond, 1998; Noguera, 2003
	Resistance to Plateauing	Lynn, 2002; Meister & Ahrens, 2011; Snyder, 2017
	Commitment to urban students	Haberman, 1994
1.5 During your career thus far, how have you developed in your practice to meet the diverse needs of your urban students?	Life history	Seidman, 2006
	Commitment to urban students	Haberman, 1994
	Teacher career cycles	Lynn, 2002; Steffy et al., 2000
	Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy	Paris & Alim, 2017
	Teacher Preparedness	Darling-Hammond, 2000
	Teachers as Intellectuals	Giroux, 1981 1988
1.6 How have your personal experiences influenced you as a veteran urban teacher?	Life history	Seidman, 2006
	Commitment to urban students	Haberman, 1994

Table 7 (continued)

Life History Interview Questions and Research Based Constructs

Interview Questions	Constructs	Literature
1.7 How have your professional experiences influenced you as a veteran urban teacher?	Teacher career cycles	Lynn, 2002; Steffy et al., 2000
	Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy	Paris & Alim, 2017
	Teacher Preparedness	Darling-Hammond, 2000
	Teachers as Intellectuals	Giroux, 1981, 1988
1.8 How have your personal and professional networks influenced you as an urban teacher?	Life history	Seidman, 2006
	Commitment to urban students	Haberman, 1994
	Urban teacher burnout	Darling-Hammond, 1998; Noguera, 2003
	Resistance to Plateauing	Lynn, 2002; Meister & Ahrens, 2011; Snyder, 2017
	Teacher Preparedness	Darling-Hammond, 2000
	Teachers as Intellectuals	Giroux, 1981, 1988

Note: Adapted from *City Schools and the American Dream: Reclaiming the Promise of Public Education,* by P. Noguera, 2003, Teachers College Pres ,copyright 2003 by Teachers College Press; from *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World,* by D. Paris and H. S. Alim, 2017, Teachers College Press, copyright 2017 by Teachers College Press; from *Ideology, Culture and the Process of Schooling*, by H. A. Giroux, 1981, copyright 1981 by Temple University Press; from *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and Social Sciences,* by I. Seidman, 2006, Teachers College Press, copyright 2006 by Teachers College Press; from *Life Cycle of the Career Teacher*, by B. E. Steffy, M. P. Wolfe, S. Pasch, and B. Enz, 2000, Corwin Press, copyright 2000 by Corwin Press, Inc; from "Preparing Teachers for the Real World of Urban Schools," by M. Haberman, 1994, *Educational Forum, 58*(2), 162-68, copyright 1994 by Educational Forum; from "Resistance to Change Among Veteran Teachers: Providing Voice for More Effective Engagement" by R. R. Snyder, 2017, *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, 12*(1), copyright 2017 by International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation; from "Resisting Plateauing: Four Veteran Teachers' Stories," by D. G. Meister & P. Ahrens, 2011, *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies, 27*(4), 770-778, copyright 2011 by An International Journal of Research and Studies; from "Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: A Review of State Policy Evidence," by L. Darling-Hammond, 2000, *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 8*(1), 1-44, copyright 2000 by Education Policy Analysis Archives; from "Teachers and Teaching: Testing Policy Hypotheses from a National Commission Report," by L. Darling-Hammond, 1998, *Education Researcher*, *27*(1), 5-15, copyright 1998 by Education Researcher; from *Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning,* by H. A. Giroux, 1988, Bergin & Garvey, copyright 1988 by Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc; from "The Winding Path: Understanding the Career Cycle of Teachers," by S. K. Lynn, 2002, *Clearing House, 75*(4), 179-82, copyright 2002 by Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation.

Interview Two: Contemporary Experience Interview

Interview two focused on reconstructing concrete details of the participant's experience as a veteran urban teacher. Table 8 identifies the questions that were asked during this interview and the guiding constructs and literature that were used to develop each question.

Table 8

Contemporary Experience Interview Questions and Research Based Constructs

Interview Questions	Constructs	Literature
2.1 Reconstruct a typical day in your life as a veteran urban teacher from the moment that you wake up to the time you fall asleep.	Contemporary experience	Seidman, 2006
	Culturally sustaining pedagogy	Paris & Alim, 2017
	Teachers as Intellectuals	Giroux, 1981, 1988
2.2 How do you meet the diverse linguistic and cultural needs of your urban students?	Commitment to urban students	Haberman, 1994
	Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy	Paris & Alim, 2017
2.3 How do you engage students' families and/or the community as an urban teacher?	Teachers as Intellectuals	Giroux, 1981, 1988
	Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy	Paris & Alim, 2017
2.4 Tell me about the professional and personal challenges you have faced as a veteran urban teacher.	Contemporary experience	Seidman, 2006
	Teacher career cycles	Lynn, 2002; Steffy, et al., 2000
	Urban teacher challenges	Abel & Sewell, 1999; Adamson & Darling-Hammond, 2012; Jacob, 2007
2.5 How do you manage these challenges?	Urban teacher burnout	Darling-Hammond, 1998; Noguera, 2003
2.6 Tell me about a time that you overcame stress or burn out in your career.	Resistance to Plateauing	Lynn, 2002; Meister & Ahrens, 2011; Snyder, 2017
2.7 How does your personal life support your stress management?	Resistance to Plateauing	Lynn, 2002; Meister & Ahrens, 2011; Snyder, 2017

Table 8 (continued)

Contemporary Experience Interview Questions and Research Based Constructs

Interview Questions	Constructs	Literature
2.8 Why did you select the two instructional artifacts that you did?	Culturally sustaining pedagogy	Paris & Alim, 2017
	Teachers as Intellectuals	Giroux, 1981, 1988
2.9 What decisions did you make in designing this lesson?	Teachers as Intellectuals	Giroux, 1981, 1988

Note: Adapted from *City Schools and the American Dream: Reclaiming the Promise of Public Education,* by P. Noguera, 2003, Teachers College Press, copyright 2003 by Teachers College Press; from *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World* by D. Paris and H. S. Alim, 2017, Teachers College Press, copyright 2017 by Teachers College Press; from "Funding Disparities and the Inequitable Distribution of Teachers: Evaluating Sources and Solutions," by F. Adamson & L. Darling-Hammond, 2012, *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 20*(37), 1-46, copyright 2012 by Education Policy Analysis Achives; from *Ideology, Culture and the Process of Schooling*, by H. A. Giroux, 1981, copyright 1981 by Temple University Press; from *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and Social Sciences,* by I. Seidman, 2006, Teachers College Press, copyright 2006 by Teachers College Press; from *Life Cycle of the Career Teacher*, by B. E. Steffy, M. P. Wolfe, S. Pasch, and B. Enz, 2000, Corwin Press, copyright 2000 by Corwin Press, Inc; from "Preparing Teachers for the Real World of Urban Schools," by M. Haberman, 1994, *Educational Forum, 58*(2), 162-68, copyright 1994 by Educational Forum; from "Resistance to Change Among Veteran Teachers: Providing Voice for More Effective Engagement" by R. R. Snyder, 2017, *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, 12*(1), copyright 2017 by International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation; from "Resisting Plateauing: Four Veteran Teachers' Stories," by D. G. Meister & P. Ahrens, 2011, *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies, 27*(4), 770-778, copyright 2011 by An International Journal of Research and Studies; from "Stress and Burnout in Rural and Urban Secondary School Teachers," by M. H. Abel & J. Sewell, 1999, *The Journal of Educational Research, 92*(5), 287-293, copyright 1999 by The Journal of Educational Research; from "Teachers and Teaching: Testing Policy Hypotheses from a National Commission Report," by L. Darling-Hammond, 1998, *Education Researcher*, *27*(1), 5-15, copyright 1998 by Education Researcher; from *Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning,* by H. A. Giroux, 1988, Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc., copyright 1988 by Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc; from "The Challenges of Staffing Urban Schools with Effective Teachers," by B. Jacob, 2007, *Future of Children, 17*(1), 129-153, copyright 2007 by Future of Children; from "The Winding Path: Understanding the Career Cycle of Teachers," by S. K. Lynn, 2002, *Clearing House, 75*(4), 179-82, copyright 2002 by Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation.

Interview Three: Reflection Interview

The goal of interview three was for the participant to reflect on her experience as a veteran urban teacher and develop meaning around this experience. Table 9 includes all of the interview questions for this round of interviews and the constructs and literature that these questions were based on.

Table 9

Reflection Interview Questions and Research Based Constructs

Interview Questions	Constructs	Literature
3.1 As a teacher of color, how do you think you mitigate stress and/or burnout differently than other urban teachers?	Meaning making	Seidman, 2006
	Resistance to plateauing	Lynn, 2002; Meister & Ahrens, 2011; Snyder, 2017
	Commitment to urban students	Haberman, 1994
3.2 Now that you have talked about how you came to become a veteran urban teacher and what it is like for you, what does it mean to you to be a veteran urban teacher?	Meaning making	Seidman, 2006
	Commitment to urban students	Haberman, 1994
	Teachers as Intellectuals	Giroux, 1981, 1988
3.3 Given the experiences and challenges you have described in being a veteran urban teacher, what does it mean to you to overcome stress and burnout personally and professionally?	Meaning making	Seidman, 2006
	Teachers as Intellectuals	Giroux, 1981, 1988
	Urban teacher burnout	Darling-Hammond, 1998; Noguera, 2003
	Resistance to plateauing	Lynn, 2002; Meister & Ahrens, 2011; Snyder, 2017
	Commitment to urban students	Haberman, 1994
3.4 What support or training do you believe is beneficial specifically for novice urban teachers?	Meaning making	Seidman, 2006
	Commitment to urban students	Haberman, 1994
	Teacher career cycles	Lynn, 2002; Steffy, et al., 2000
	Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy	Paris & Alim, 2017
	Teacher Preparedness	Darling-Hammond, 2000
3.5 What are the three most important things about urban teaching you would want others to know?	Meaning making	Seidman, 2006
	Commitment to urban students	Haberman, 1994
	Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy	Paris & Alim, 2017

Table 9 (continued)

Reflection Interview Questions and Research Based Constructs

Interview Questions	Constructs	Literature
3.4 What support or training do you believe is beneficial specifically for novice urban teachers?	Meaning making	Seidman, 2006
	Commitment to urban students	Haberman, 1994
	Teacher career cycles	Lynn, 2002; Steffy, et al., 2000
	Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy	Paris & Alim, 2017
	Teacher Preparedness	Darling-Hammond, 2000
3.6 Given what you have reconstructed in these interviews, where do you see yourself going in the future as an urban educator?	Commitment to urban students	Haberman, 1994
	Teacher career cycles	Lynn, 2002; Steffy, et al., 2000
3.7 Reflecting upon your career as an urban educator thus far, what is one word you would use to describe it? Why?	Meaning making	Seidman, 2006

Note: Adapted from *City Schools and the American Dream: Reclaiming the Promise of Public Education,* by P. Noguera, 2003, Teachers College Press, copyright 2003 by Teachers College Press; from *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World* by D. Paris and H. S. Alim, 2017, Teachers College Press, copyright 2017 by Teachers College Press; from *Ideology, Culture and the Process of Schooling*, by H. A. Giroux, 1981, Temple University Press , copyright 1981 by Temple University Press; from *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and Social Sciences,* by I. Seidman, 2006, Teachers College Press, copyright 2006 by Teachers College Press; from *Life Cycle of the Career Teacher*, by B. E. Steffy, M. P. Wolfe, S. Pasch, and B. Enz, 2000, Corwin Press, copyright 2000 by Corwin Press, Inc; from "Preparing Teachers for the Real World of Urban Schools," by M. Haberman, 1994, *Educational Forum, 58*(2), 162-68, copyright 1994 by Educational Forum; from "Resistance to Change Among Veteran Teachers: Providing Voice for More Effective Engagement" by R. R. Snyder, 2017, *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, 12*(1), copyright 2017 by International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation; from "Resisting Plateauing: Four Veteran Teachers' Stories," by D. G. Meister & P. Ahrens, 2011, *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies, 27*(4), 770-778, copyright 2011 by An International Journal of Research and Studies; from "Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: A Review of State Policy Evidence," by L. Darling-Hammond, 2000, *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 8*(1), 1-44, copyright 2000 by Education Policy Analysis Archives; from "Teachers and Teaching: Testing Policy Hypotheses from a National Commission Report," by L. Darling-Hammond, 1998, *Education Researcher*, *27*(1), 5-15, copyright 1998 by Education Researcher; from *Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning,* by H. A. Giroux, 1988, Bergin & Garvey, copyright 1988 by Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc; from "The Winding Path: Understanding the Career Cycle of Teachers," by S. K. Lynn, 2002, *Clearing House, 75*(4), 179-82, copyright 2002 by Helen Dwight Reid Educational Foundation.

Field Notes

According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), field notes are "the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data" (p.119). I documented notes during and after each interview to develop depth in the data by supplementing interview transcripts. The field notes additionally provided me with a starting point for coding in the data analysis process.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection in qualitative research

(Creswell, 2013; Leavy, 2017). In this study, I collected data through a survey, instructional

documents, semi-structured interviews, and field notes. The data collection process for this study

is demonstrated on Figure 8.

Figure 8

Data Collection Process

Teacher Demographic & Screening Survey
During application process
Emailed to participants
Google Form format

- Contact information
- Demographic data
- Professional history
  - Professional development
  - Leadership roles
- Instructional practice
  - Frequency and details of implementation of culturally sustaining elements

Documents
Requested via email
Submitted by participants to researcher via email

- Evidence of culturally sustaining practice implementation

Semi-Structured Interview Series
Virtual meetings via Zoom
3 rounds of interviews
45-120 minutes per interview

- Experiences, perspectives, and understandings of phenomena

Teacher Demographics and Screening Survey

During the participant nomination process, I emailed a link to the demographic and

screening survey to all teachers with at least 10 years of teaching experience at River City

Elementary School District. The survey was created using a Google Form. Teachers were given

seven workdays to complete and submit the survey if they were interested in participating. A

reminder email was sent after five workdays to all teachers. Some teachers emailed me in

response requesting an extension due to the fact that they were interested in participating but

lacked the time to complete the survey while preparing for parent conferences. As a result, I

emailed all teachers and provided them an additional seven workdays to submit the survey. The

survey can be found in Appendix B.

Documents: Instructional Artifacts

Participants agreed to provide two instructional artifacts when they submitted their

screening surveys. After participants were selected, they were asked to email me at least two

instructional artifacts that demonstrated their practice as culturally sustaining pedagogues.

Teachers submitted a variety of documents, including Google Slides presentations, student work

samples, SeeSaw activities, and project descriptions (https://web.seesaw.me). Individual

participant's documents were identified using the participants' pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

Documents were discussed during the second interview with each participant. Documents

submitted by participants were diverse, including lesson plans, a poem template, student work

samples, student voice recordings, and handouts given to students. These documents were used

for instruction in the areas of math, language arts, and history-social studies.

Three Semi-Structured Interview Series

The main method of data collection for this study was a three round, semi-structured

interview process. Each interview took between 45 minutes to two hours. The interview protocol

for all three interviews can be found in Appendix C. All three interviews took place via Zoom, a

video conferencing application (http://www.zoom.us). Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed using Zoom's built-in features. Participants had the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interviews for accuracy. This process increased the reliability of the interviews, as participants had the opportunity to correct inaccuracies or request to add additional reflections to their previous responses (Creswell, 2013; Seidman, 2006). Participants were asked to submit their corrected transcriptions within five working days of their interview. None of the participants requested to make corrections to their transcripts, however, three participants requested to further explain previously stated remarks during upcoming interviews.

Seidman (2006) argued that the three-interview series was the most distinguishing feature of phenomenological research as it allowed the researcher to contextualize each participant's behavior to provide a more meaningful and understandable account of his or her perspective. Each interview had a distinct purpose and built upon the previous one. Additionally, employing multiple interviews helped me develop trust with participants over the course of the three interviews. Consequently, this interview design contributed to the richness of each participant's *testimonio*. Table 10 identifies the purpose of each interview and the overarching question that guided each specific interview.

Table 10

Purpose and Guiding Question for Each Interview

Interview	Purpose	Guiding Questions
1. Life History	Contextualize Participant's Experience	How did the participant come to be a veteran urban teacher?
2. Contemporary Experience	Reconstruct Concrete Details	What is it like for the participant to be a veteran urban teacher?
		What are the details of the participant's personal and professional life as a Latina veteran urban teacher?
3. Reflection	Meaning Making	What does it mean to the participant to be a veteran urban teacher?
		Given what the participant has said in interviews one and two, how does she make sense of her work as a Latina veteran urban teacher?

Note. Adapted from *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and Social Sciences* by I. Seidman, 2006, Teachers College Press. Copyright 2006 by Teachers College Press.

The first interview focused on the participant's life history in terms of the topic being discussed (Seidman, 2006). The purpose of this interview was to place the participant's experience in context (Seidman, 2006). For this study, the research question comprehensively answered, how did the participant come to be a veteran urban teacher? This included a review of the participant's relevant life history up to date.

The second interview focused on the participant's contemporary experience by reconstructing "the concrete details of the participants' present lived experience in the topic area of the study" (Seidman, 2006, p. 33). Additionally, this interview asked the participants to discuss the development of the instructional artifacts that they submitted. This interview concentrated on answering the questions:

- What is it like for the participant to be a veteran urban teacher?

- What are the details of the participant's personal and professional life as a veteran urban teacher?

This provided detailed accounts of participants' personal and professional experiences around the phenomena being studied.

The final interview in the data collection process supported participants in reflecting on the meaning of their experiences and ensured that member checking took place (Seidman, 2006). This interview was concentrated around two primary questions:

- What does it mean to the participant to be a veteran urban teacher?
- Given what the participant has said in interviews one and two, how does she make sense of her work as a Latina veteran urban teacher?

This third interview was in line with the study's theoretical framework of teachers as intellectuals. Teachers that view themselves as intellectuals are reflective practitioners who practice critical thought (Giroux, 1981). By member checking during the third interview and focusing on the participants' meaning making process, I was able to validate teachers' own critical analysis and judgement of the phenomenon at hand.

A journal for field notes throughout the study was also be maintained. Field notes were taken during and after each interview using a standardized template, which is included in Appendix D. Notes included nonverbal observations of the participants, such as body language, long pauses, and tone. I also annotated any highlights from the interview. The field notes additionally documented my initial reactions, connections, or thoughts about the interview.

Timeline

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all schools in River City Elementary School District transitioned to distance learning during the spring of 2020. Consequently, the original timeline for this study was impacted.

The study was conducted during the fall of 2020. The application process took place from September to October of 2020. The first four participants were selected by the end of September 2020 and the last two participants were selected in October of 2020.

Participants were contacted, and three interviews were scheduled with each participant between October and December of 2020. Originally, my plan was to hold each round of interviews no more than two weeks apart in order to provide participants with enough time to reflect on the previous interview without allowing too much time for the participant to lose connection between the two interviews (Seidman, 2006). However, due to participants increased personal and professional responsibilities during the pandemic, each participant developed their own timeline for interviewing. This enabled me to recruit more participants and accommodate each of their needs.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

</div>

Qualitative researchers do not start with a clear end goal, instead patterns and themes emerge as the data is progressively collected and analyzed (Creswell, 2014). My data analysis consisted of three phases, the reflection in between interviews, the development of the *testimonios,* and the cross-case analysis. Figure 9 outlines the multiple steps in the data collection and data analysis process for this study.

Figure 9

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection			Data Analysis	
Screening Survey	**Documents**	**Three Semi-Structured Interview Series**	***Testimonios***	**Cross-Case Analysis**
demographic data	evidence of practice as culturally sustaining pedagogues	life history	inductive coding	refined codes
professional history		contemporary experience	creation of topical themes	organization of codes into categories
culturally sustaining practices		reflection	member checking	creation of themes

Data Analysis Phase One: Survey Commonalities and Interview Reflections

Phase one in the data analysis process began before and during the three semi structured interview series. At this point, I had demographic data, professional history information, and culturally sustaining practices ratings from each participant's screening survey. Additionally, participants had also submitted evidence of their culturally sustaining instructional implementation in the form of instructional documents. Before starting interviews, I began identifying commonalities between participants' demographics, professional history, and instructional documents. Then, I carried out three independent interviews with each participant using the interview protocol in Appendix C. Follow up questions were added to each interview

as needed based on data from the survey and documents. In between interviews I reflected on initial observations and patterns and made annotations in my field notes.

Data Analysis Phase Two: Development of the *Testimonios*

The development of the *testimonios* initiated the second phase of data analysis. To prepare the data, all interviews were transcribed by Zoom, a video conferencing program that automatically transcribes recorded audio. These transcriptions were then edited to ensure participants' anonymity by replacing identifying information with pseudonyms, such as the names of individuals, cities, or schools. Then, these transcripts were uploaded to Dedoose, an application for organizing, coding, and analyzing qualitative data (Dedoose software tool version 8.3.47b, 2021). A multistep coding process enabled me to employ pattern analysis, which is the discovery of patterns, themes, and categories within the data (Patton, 2014). Inductive coding was implemented to examine data for topical themes first by identifying key details from participants' transcripts on Dedoose (Creswell, 2014). Continued inductive coding helped me identify three topical themes for the *testimonios*. The *testimonios* were organized into three sections based on these topical themes. The topical themes included participant's schooling experiences as students, journey into urban education, and factors that sustained them in urban teaching throughout their career thus far.

After *testimonios* were developed, I provided participants with a copy of their *testimonio.* Each participant had the opportunity to provide edits to their *testimonio* if they felt it was needed. This process is referred to as member checking and ensures that participants voices and stories are accurately represented (Creswell, 2014).

Data Analysis Phase Three: Cross-Case Analysis

Once the *testimonios* were finalized, the third phase of data analysis consisted of the

cross-case analysis. At this stage, codes were refined. Some codes were renamed or combined to

make them more precise. Codes with a frequency of four or less across participants were deleted

or joined with other codes that covered a similar topic. Gradually, through these multiple rereads

and rounds of coding, codes were organized into categories and emerging themes were identified

to provide a collective interpretation of participants' responses (Creswell, 2014).

Trustworthiness

All research requires the researcher to establish validity. In qualitative research design,

the term trustworthiness is used in exchange for validity (Merriam, 1998; Mills & Gay, 2018). In

this qualitative research study, I was the data gathering instrument as the researcher. Inevitably,

this can result in discrepancies in the data collection and analysis due to the impact that I could

have had on the data; therefore, ensuring trustworthiness is critical (Creswell, 2014). Guba

(1981; as cited in Mills & Gay, 2018) affirmed that there are four components for establishing

trustworthiness in qualitative research, which are credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability.

Credibility

Establishing credibility requires consideration of all of the complexities of a study and

addressing problems that are not easy to explain (Mills & Gay, 2018). In order to establish

credibility in this study, member checking was employed. Member checking allowed participants

the opportunity to review interview transcripts for accuracy, including how the participants'

perspectives are presented (Creswell, 2014). This also enabled them to further explain topics that they felt required additional detail or clarification.

Additionally, credibility was built into the instrumentation of this study. The interview questions were based on existing literature on urban teachers and veteran teachers.

Transferability

Although qualitative research is context-bound by nature and, therefore, does not aim for generalizability, establishing transferability is critical to ensure trustworthiness (Mills & Gay, 2018). In this study, this was done by providing explicit description of the data collection process, including the data collection tools, and collecting detailed descriptive data.

Dependability

The dependability of qualitative research can also be referred to as the stability of the collected data (Mills & Gay, 2018). For this study there was overlapping data collection methods that helped develop a more comprehensive, triangulated understanding of the phenomena. These included a survey, collection of multiple instructional documents, and three semi-structured interviews with each participant over the course of three months. Through these various methods, idiosyncrasies were accounted for, developing internal consistency (Seidman, 2006).

Confirmability

Confirmability is established by ensuring that the data collected is neutral and objective (Mills & Gay, 2018). Practicing triangulation of data collection sources and methods allowed data to be compared and verified (Mills & Gay, 2018). Practicing reflexivity, or intentionally disclosing biases and assumptions that could impact data collection and analysis, also supported the confirmability of this study (Mills & Gay, 2018).

Conclusion

This chapter described the qualitative phenomenological research design and methodology that was utilized in this study to answer the following research question:

What are the personal and professional factors that sustain Latina veteran urban teachers?

Extensive data collection, including a survey, documents, three round interview process, and field notes ensured comprehensive data collection centered around the participants' perspectives and personal experiences with the phenomena. The use of various data collection tools also promoted triangulation and trustworthiness in the study (Mills & Gay, 2018).

CHAPTER 4

TESTIMONIOS

The findings of this phenomenological qualitative study are presented in this chapter. The data for this study was collected employing the methodology described in Chapter 3. Data collection consisted of a screening survey, instructional documents, and three semi-structured interviews. An inductive coding process was used to analyze each participant's interviews and documents in order to develop the topical themes for participants' *testimonios* (Creswell, 2014). *Testimonios* are a methodological approach that empowers individuals from marginalized groups, such as Latinas, by affirming their firsthand accounts through narrative retelling (Blackmer Reyes & Curry Rodriguez, 2012). After the testimonios were developed, a cross-case analysis was implemented to identifying and analyze commonalities across participants' *testimonios*. The findings in this chapter address the following research question:

What are the personal and professional factors that sustain Latina veteran urban teachers?

This chapter starts by sharing each participant's *testimonio* as a narrative of their personal and professional story as a Latina veteran urban teacher. The *testimonios* are organized into three sections based on three topical themes, which include participants' schooling experiences as students, journey into urban education, and factors that sustained them in urban teaching throughout their career thus far. After sharing each participant's *testimonio,* this chapter offers a cross case analysis of shared themes across all six participants' stories.

Participants

Six participants were selected for this study through an application process and criterion sampling. To participate, candidates had to meet the following three criteria:

- **veteran teacher:** The teacher has at least ten years of teaching experience in an urban school (Rockoff, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

- **urban teacher:** The teacher currently serves in a school with a student population that is comprised of a majority of minority students and a majority of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, as identified by free and reduced lunch qualification (Eckert, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006; NCES, 2020; Noguera, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

- **culturally sustaining pedagogue:** The teacher employs culturally sustaining pedagogy as an instructional framework in order to meet the unique needs of urban students (Paris & Alim, 2017).

During the recruitment process, all veteran urban teachers in River City Elementary School District were emailed the screening survey. Interested candidates applied to participate in the study by submitting the survey. The responses to the survey were then reviewed to ensure that candidates met the criteria. Four out of ten applicants were selected to participate and asked to recommend additional participants. Two more participants were selected based on these recommendations. All six selected participants were self-identified Latinas with a minimum of 10 years teaching experience in an urban school setting. They all fulfilled the majority of the four elements of a culturally sustaining pedagogue. Table 11 demonstrates the participants' personal information. All names were replaced by participant-selected pseudonyms in order to maintain each participant's anonymity.

Table 11

Participants' Personal Information

Name	Age Range	Years of Teaching Experience	Education Level	Certifications
Bella	31-35	12	Master's	BCLAD
Carmen	41-45	17	Master's	GATE
Clarissa	46-50	24	Master's	GATE
Maria de la Luz	36-40	15	Master's	BCLAD
Paula	36-40	14	Master's	BCLAD
Penelope	31-35	14	Master's	BCLAD

Note. Data collected from teacher demographics and screening survey.

Participants ranged in years of experience with 12-24 years. All participants had a master's degree. All participants were fluent bilingual Spanish speakers and four of them had a bilingual teaching certification. Two participants, Maria de la Luz and Paula, were dual language immersion teachers at the time that this study took place.

Instructional Artifacts

As part of the data collection process, participants submitted at least two instructional artifacts that were representative of their practice as culturally sustaining pedagogues. Table 12 identifies the instructional artifacts submitted by each participant.

Table 12

Instructional Artifacts Submitted by Participants

Participant	Artifact Type	Subject Area	Topic	Additional Instructional Resources
Bella	Lesson presentation slides Student work samples	Math	Ratios and proportions at the grocery store	Clippings from local grocery store ads
Carmen	Poem template Student work samples	Language Arts	Family heritage	Book *Momma, Where Are You From?* by Marie Bradby
Clarissa	Lesson plan Student work samples	History-Social Studies	Migration	Book *Molly's Pilgrim* by Barbara Cohen
Maria de la Luz	Lesson presentation slides Student work samples	History-Social Studies	Día de los Muertos	SeeSaw virtual altars Teacher bilingual voice recordings of instructions
Paula	SeeSaw lesson slides Student work samples Student voice recordings	Language Arts	Name origin and family heritage	Book *Alma y como obtuvo su nombre* by Juana Martínez-Neal Bilingual parent letter
Penelope	Lesson presentation slides Student work samples	History-Social Studies	Family and cultural heritage	Bilingual parent letter Graphic organizers

These instructional artifacts demonstrated Latina veteran urban teachers' ability to integrate culturally sustaining practices into a variety of subject areas. Participants discussed their artifacts in detail during the second interview.

The *Testimonios*

Bella

Bella was born in Mexico and immigrated to the United States at a young age. Her parents moved their family "chasing that dream of a better life". Bella's dad worked in the fields, "a humble job . . . that a lot of people avoid", in order to help his family succeed. Her parents instilled in her a "solid set of values", such as a strong work ethic and sense of independence telling her that "if you're going to do something, do it right and do it to the best of your ability", which motivated her throughout her education and career. She was the only one out of six siblings who graduated from high school, which made her proud and eager to continue growing professionally.

Bella attended elementary school in River City Elementary School District and felt a strong connection to the community that she was raised in. She taught various grade levels for 14 years in RCESD, including ten years as a sixth-grade teacher at her current school. She also held various positions on school site committees, such as Grade Level Leadership chair, School News Committee producer, Angels Jr. RBI coach, Yearbook Committee member, Safety Committee member, Parent Teacher Association teacher representative, and E-Sports Club coach. At the district level she was part of the Math Curriculum Adoption Committee and was a support provider for the new teacher induction program.

Schooling: Not Just Another Student

Bella's experience throughout her schooling was positive. She remembered her teachers affectionately and described them as "nurturing" and "motivating". She stated that "all the teachers that [she] came across in [her] entire education were very encouraging [and] never

allowed [her] to settle for average." Bella was an ambitious "straight-A student" and her teachers saw her potential and inspired her to do her best.

As an emergent bilingual student, Bella was aware of her label. Although she could not remember the details, she explained that she was in a bilingual program during her primary years where "you were placed in a small group where they taught you in Spanish." Moving to a new elementary school gave her a fresh start to "blossom" and prove her English skills. She stated that although she "loved" learning in Spanish, she wanted to "embrace learning English at school full on and then at home [she] could learn Spanish." As a child, Bella felt that English would be the key to her future success.

Bella conveyed how important the connections that she had with her teachers were in motivating her. She remembered her teachers enthusiastically, stating:

> All of my teachers, I still remember them for that particular reason. Because they could have easily looked the other way and been like this is just another student, right, but they didn't. They knew everything about me. They knew my background. They knew about my family. They would say hello to my parents. So just having that connection, it inspires you to want to go to school, you know?

Bella felt seen and cared for by her teachers, which motivated her to go to school daily and try her best. These early experiences in school also motivated Bella in her long-term goal to pursue higher education to become a teacher herself in an effort to inspire the next generation of students.

Journey to Urban Education: Pass the Baton

Bella appreciated all the support and encouragement that she received from teachers throughout her schooling. Consequently, she felt that she had to do her part to "pass the baton," or give back after everything that she had received.

From an early age, Bella remembered taking on teaching responsibilities as a student. She always aspired to be a class helper and enjoyed "being in charge of helping smaller groups" or staying after school to "help the teacher with whoever was struggling" by tutoring them. These early teaching experiences nurtured her interest in helping others.

Paula explained that all her teachers encouraged her, but her sixth-grade teacher, in particular, left a lasting impression on her. She remembered thinking that she also wanted to come back and be a sixth-grade teacher and serve in the same elementary school. Speaking about the inspiration that this teacher had on her, she stated:

> I remember a particular conversation I had with my sixth-grade teacher. She said, "Where do you see yourself in 10 years?" and I was like, "Wow, I'm only 11. How am I supposed to answer this question?" But when she asked that question, I started reflecting on what I like to do. What is it that drives me, motivates me? What's the engine that drives me? And so, for me it was to improve myself so that I could see others thrive in the future.

These initial conversations about future goals along with her experiences with tutoring her peers helped Bella begin setting the course for a career in education. Further, she reflected on the impact that her teachers had on her as an individual student and thought "If that's what happened with one person, what can I do with a group of 30?" Her goal was to replicate her success story with all the students that came into her classroom.

Bella's goal, however, was not simply to teach. She wanted to give back to her own community and serve students who were like her. She explained, "It never crossed my mind to go teach anywhere else. I mean, I'm from the same community and I can relate to a lot of the kiddos in the community. Same background. Low socio-economic status growing up." Bella felt that being able to relate to her students was important and that this shared identity, or shared linguistic and cultural background, was especially beneficial in an urban setting. She recalled a recent conversation that she had with her sister. When her sister asked why she did not explore other more "well off districts", Bella responded:

> They need me. So, the reason I continue to serve the urban community is because I know that my skills and my traits and everything about me and my, you know, motivation for teaching is going to better serve the community in this urban setting. I feel like if I go somewhere else my talents, my dedication may not be as appreciated.

Bella felt valued by her school community, including students, parents, and colleagues, because of her identity as a Latina, emergent bilingual, child of immigrants. Her identity was an asset in urban education because she understood her students and their families on a personal level. This connection with her students continued motivating Bella throughout her career.

Sustaining in Urban Teaching: Passionate

Bella identified her passion as the reason why she continued working to "be the best version of [herself]" throughout her tenure as an urban teacher. This passion sustained her and motivated her to "bend over backwards" to be an effective teacher for her urban students. She also explained that this same passion pushed her to pursue professional development opportunities, fulfill leadership roles outside of her classroom, and mentor new teachers. She

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stated, "If I didn't have that passion, I think my story would be different." Bella understood that

her passion helped her remain committed to her role as an urban teacher and to "give 100%

every single time" in order to make a difference in her students' lives.

Driven by Faith: *Amor al Prójimo.* Much of Bella's passion for urban education was

grounded in her faith. Bella emphasized that "[her] religious background has a lot to do with who

[she] is today." As a Jehovah's Witness, Bella read and studied the Bible frequently and used

scripture as a guide for her life stating, "Every time I read a Bible text I think, 'How can I apply

this to them? How can I apply this to the classroom?'" She clarified that as a public-school

teacher she does not "talk about religion" with her students, but she does apply what she learns in

Bible study to her teaching practice and to the relationships that she builds with students and

families.

Reflecting on her favorite Bible verse, John 4:8, Bella explained:

It says that whoever doesn't love their significant other, their neighbor, hasn't really

learned to love God. So, for me, it's like if I love my significant other or my friends and

family, my students, I feel like, you know what, then I can say that I truly love God.

Bella made it a goal to lead her personal and professional life driven by her faith.

Although she was a public-school teacher, she incorporated the values that her faith instilled in

her into her teaching practice. She wanted to impact her students' lives guided by the value of

"amor al prójimo (love thy neighbor)" and believed that "you can show this love in a variety of

different ways." Bella demonstrated love for her urban students by "showing empathy", building

strong personal relationships with them and their families, and being the best version of herself.

With her faith as her foundation, Bella was impassioned to serve her urban students as a reflection of her love for God.

Shared Identity: Proving Others Wrong. Much of Bella's passion also stemmed from her shared identity with her students. She related to her students because of her own identity as an emergent bilingual student and as a Latina from a low socioeconomic background. She explained:

> I have that passion to prove that children that are from diverse backgrounds, like myself, can achieve anything. That we're not limited by our backgrounds. . . . I want to prove to others that anyone can do it if I did it. . . . I feel like the children we teach are able to do the same thing. That's what drives me, to be honest. I mean, I'm passionate about teaching, but I'm passionate more so to give these children an opportunity. And if I do my best, I know that I'm already sending them on the right path.

Bella made it a personal mission to "prove" to negative voices, including those of colleagues and society as a whole, that students from urban settings were just as capable as others. She felt a commitment to her urban students' success and was proud to "make a difference in the Latino community" because she related to them and wanted to empower these students to break stereotypes and "succeed in the future." This motivated her to give the best of herself and to continuously improve her instructional practice. Bella felt pride sharing about the progress that her sixth-graders would make every year stating, "When they get reclassified, I see that as a victory. When their reading level goes up maybe one grade level, two, three. That's a victory." She explained that this progress proved that "language is not a barrier if [teachers] put in the time to figure out where [students'] needs are."

As a Latina teacher who was raised in an urban community, Bella shared a similar background to many of her urban students. This fueled her passion for urban education and sustained her to remain committed to this community throughout her career.

Professional Development: I Want Them to Have the Best Teacher. Bella attributed professional development as another factor that contributed to sustaining her as a veteran urban teacher. She explained that professional development "kept [her] fire going" because she drew inspiration from learning from others and observing other educators. Bella did not want to "stay stagnant," and was motivated by her mom's advice to "move forward" and "not sit still."

She compared her professional development throughout her career to cellphone updates stating:

I'm constantly thinking about my own practice and realizing that some of these practices need to be updated. Just like the new iPhone. iPhone comes out with a new version every so often. That's how I see my teaching. Like, I'm at my 10.0 version, right? But can you imagine if I stayed with the same version that I had going in? I think it would be a disservice.

Much like a cellphone, Bella felt that she also needed to self-evaluate, reflect, and update her practice consistently in order to provide her students with the best "service". Imagining herself being the "same version" of herself today as she was as a novice teacher, she recognized that she would not be meeting her objective as a teacher. Bella considered herself a lifelong learner and thought that her students deserved to have "the best teacher in the classroom with them." For this to take place, she needed to continuously refine her teaching practice.

I wanted the kiddos to have the best teacher in the classroom with them. And if I'm the best version of myself, I'm assuming that they would be the best version of themselves. Because I feel like you lead by example. You never tell someone to do something, but then you don't do it yourself.

Bella's dedication to be a role model for her students and to provide them with an optimal education motivated her to seek out professional development opportunities. She participated in formal trainings, observed peers, sought feedback from administrators, and took on numerous professional responsibilities outside of her classroom.

Carmen

Carmen was born in the United States to "traditional" Mexican immigrant parents. She was raised in a Spanish speaking household where "hard work" was promoted by her dad, which motivated her academically. She grew up in a predominantly Latina/o city that neighbors River City.

Carmen taught kindergarten, third, and fourth grade for the past 17 years in the same elementary school. She served on School Site Council and Safety Committee and was a grade level chair and teacher representative on her school's Parent Teacher Association. She was also a lead teacher for the district's writing program and served as a master teacher for student teachers who are completing their credential program.

Schooling: Hard Work Ethic

Carmen attended Catholic private elementary and middle schools, but her parents decided to move her to a public high school because her dad believed "[she] would excel no matter where

she went." Carmen credited her parents for motivating her to do well in school. Her dad instilled

in her a strong work ethic through his own efforts as a construction worker:

> I would pretty much just really work hard at school. I think I got that from my dad's work
>
> ethic. He just kind of instilled that in us naturally. He had a big influence on that, but I
>
> just naturally had that instinct to really want to do well and it was a part of me. All
>
> through school I just tried my best at everything.

Carmen also acknowledged the important role that her teachers played in motivating her

to do well academically. She described her teachers as "intense" but "nice and supportive." Since

she attended private schools through middle school, she also felt that she had a "spiritually

supportive environment" that nurtured her as a student. Describing her experience in private

schools she explained how her teachers "drove [her] to perform at a certain level."

Because of her work ethic and motivating teachers, she "excelled academically" and was

viewed as a "good student since [she] was little." This "paid off" as she graduated high school

and earned various recognitions and grants that financially supported her college aspirations.

These experiences inspired her long-term goal of becoming a teacher.

Journey to Urban Teaching: My Dream was to be Like Them

Carmen recalled that she "really wanted to be a teacher since [she] first started school."

As she recalled this childhood ambition, she explained:

> That's pretty much the career that I stuck with in mind until I got to college and worked
>
> my way up through school. I didn't even give any other career any mind. I didn't think
>
> about anything else other than being a teacher

Carmen identified her own teachers as being the inspiration behind this goal stating, "I felt like I had really great teachers, growing up and it was pretty much my dream as a child to be like them." She remembered her teachers "dearly" and the motivation they provided her to excel in school.

Carmen started her career in education as a substitute instructional aid in the district that she attended as a student. She subbed in different schools and gained experience in both general education and special education. Through these early career experiences, she "got to see a variety of classrooms" while "ingrained" in a predominantly Latina/o student population. She also had the opportunity to see some of her old teachers. Describing these experiences, she stated, "It was my community that really pushed me to be a teacher. And I stuck with it and gathered experience in the district." By working within the district that she grew up in and alongside some of the teachers who inspired her as a child, Carmen's dream of becoming a teacher was further validated.

As she worked to accomplish this dream, she continued working hard and came across additional inspiring educators. The "high expectations" in her teacher preparation program and "great professors" maintained her motivation to pursue the teaching profession. Carmen recognized that "teachers and professors played a big role in [her] career."

After graduating with her credential, she sought out a teaching position in her home district, however, they were not hiring at the time. Consequently, she applied as a substitute at River City Elementary School District since she considered it to be "very similar" to her home district in terms of student demographics. Carmen explained that "[her] experience has been in

only urban schools" and she felt that it was "a great reflection of where [she] grew up." She enjoyed the sense of giving back to the community that she was a part of.

Sustaining in Urban Teaching: Enriching

Carmen described her 17 years in urban teaching as "enriching." She stated that her career "enriches [her] life on so many levels" and explained that "the environment that [she] works] in professionally has really made [her] feel at home and made [her] feel like there's no other place [she] really wants to go." She attributed this to the people that she worked with explaining how they have sustained her throughout the years:

> I feel it has a lot to do with the people that I work with and the families I work with. The children that I work with. It's a lot of factors that really just have kept me here. Even if I hear that there's different opportunities in other districts away from this community, I have never really given that much thought because I'm happy where I am. And I plan on being here for however long they'd like to keep me.

The colleagues, families, and students that Carmen worked with sustained and enriched her professional practice as an urban teacher. She had developed community with these individuals who made her workplace feel like home.

Shared Identity: Common Ground. A factor that enriched Carmen's professional career and, consequently, sustained her as a Latina veteran urban teacher was her shared identity with her students and their families. She explained how this "common ground" created comfort for her students, families, and herself. She stated, "I think all of that gives us that ease and feeling that I'm right at home, you know? Because I feel that common sense of culture and

language." Sharing a cultural and linguistic background with her students and their families provided Carmen with the comfort of feeling at home within her own community.

Carmen also gained a sense of fulfillment in serving students that resembled her background and described her service to urban communities as a "privilege." She stated, "That sense of culture, that sense of pride in who we are, those connections that I've built also definitely makes me happier at work every day." The cultural connection that Carmen had with her students promoted happiness and fulfillment in her professional work.

Carmen acknowledged how her shared identity benefitted her in the classroom. She felt that her personal experiences and upbringing influenced her perception of her Latina/o students and their parents since they shared many characteristics. She stated:

My mom was a stay-at-home mom. Her job was to take me to school, make sure our house was tidy, make sure we had laundry done. And I see that in my parents that I work with today. I see the moms that stay home. I know that there are dads that go out and work. My dad was a construction worker. I could see those same type of living environments at home with these students. . . . I totally understand that there are students that are part of broken families and are living in different situations that I was not exposed to as a child, so I keep those things in mind. I feel like my background, growing up in my [Latina/o] neighborhood, could influence the way that I see the [students] and parents that I work with today.

Carmen's personal experiences helped her better understand the home dynamics of her students and gave her greater sensitivity in addressing their needs. She worked to develop strong connections with her students as a baseline for meeting student needs. She stated, "I feel it's

important. I think building connections with the students is probably the first main way of meeting their needs culturally and linguistically." Understanding that the practice of building connections with students was important, Carmen used these cultural and linguistic connections to support student success. This supported her asset-based approach to providing rigorous effective instruction, while being sensitive to the dynamics that her students faced. She explained, "You have to maintain high expectations, no matter where you work. I think lowering the standard is one of the biggest problems." Carmen felt that some urban teachers did not have high expectations of their urban students, which was detrimental to student success. She clarified that "of course there are situations that are very hard to handle for kids," but she thought it was "most important" that she maintain high expectations of her students to help them "reach their greatest potential."

Carmen's own experiences as a student with teachers who motivated her and held high expectations influenced her own approach to teaching. However, her shared identity gave her the benefit of "knowing the culture enough" to understand students and be able to support them through the challenges they might be facing.

Building Community with Parents. Carmen's shared cultural and linguistic identity also helped her as she worked to engage parents. She described how her "Spanish speaking background" gave her an "advantage so [she didn't] depend on anyone else to help [her] communicate with parents." She acknowledged that this enabled her to "reach out to them anytime" without communication challenges. Carmen was "grateful" for her bilingualism and how much it benefitted her in building connections with parents stating, "I wouldn't change that for a thing." Her cultural background also helped parents feel "comfortable" approaching her. At

times, parents would "confide" in her about situations "that come up at home" beyond the topic of student learning. Carmen acknowledged that this level of trust that parents had in her was a "privilege."

Carmen explained that the "focus in a lot of [her] career [was] building parent communication and building that community." She had an "open door policy" with parents that gave them the confidence to communicate with her at any time. She explained that she really valued parent involvement and it was part of her "passion" because "parents are the first resource" and "most important support system" for student success.

For three years, Carmen worked closely with her site's former community liaison, who she referred to as "the queen" of parent engagement. They worked collaboratively to build parent engagement across her school. This community liaison moved on to a district level position focused on parent involvement, however, Carmen proudly recalled memories of working with and learning from her stating they were "extremely influential" for her professional practice. Carmen collaborated with this community liaison to hold parent workshops on various topics, including supporting them in teaching their children how to read.

Carmen highlighted that parents in urban communities "are more capable than what you might assume and sometimes it's just a matter of empowering them and letting them know they're capable." She worked to "bring that awareness to parents that they can make more of a difference than they think they can." Carmen motivated parents through parent workshops, family days, regular communication, and other parent involvement strategies. She explained:

I feel a lot of times parents just need that encouragement. Like, 'No, you can do this! Let's just stay on top of certain things.' And I really try to encourage them to take an

active approach instead of a passive approach. And at the same time, I do know parents are dealing with a lot at home. There's a lot of stress, you know. There's work. There's the stresses of daily life. So I definitely think the whole concept of parent involvement is very complex.

Despite the complexity of parent involvement, Carmen still worked diligently to build connections with families and engage parents in their children's education. She stated that "it's something that you really work at" because "it could have a huge impact on the whole environment that you have at school." She felt that parent involvement was "crucial, especially in an urban school setting." Carmen's time and efforts spent on connecting with and supporting parents resulted in high parent involvement and engagement in her classroom.

We Can All Count on Each Other. Carmen had a strong professional network that sustained her on a personal and professional level. She explained the reciprocal relationship between her home and work contexts, stating that "the home life affects the work life and the work life affects the home life." Because of this, she appreciated that her professional network had become like "family." They remained "in touch with everyone's personal life" and celebrated each other through life milestones while also supporting each other through challenges. These relationships with colleagues also helped to "lighten up the day and make the day enjoyable" as they socialized during recess and lunch breaks.

In the professional context, Carmen attributed much of her development as an urban teacher to her network. She explained that "working with fabulous teachers and staff and principals" created an environment that "helped [her] grow" and "developed" her professionally. Carmen stated, "all those great mentors and coworkers and leaders were definitely a big part of

who I am now as an urban teacher." By immersing herself with strong educators, Carmen was able to learn from them and strengthen her practice as a teacher. She added, "The more knowledge you can get from everyone, the better you will be."

Aside from her greater professional network of peers, administrators, and mentors, Carmen also found a strong network within her grade level team. She acknowledged how their shared "common goal of helping students" contributed to their effective collaboration. Her grade level team developed good "camaraderie" and met weekly to develop lesson plans and instructional materials. Through this collaboration they would "take on different roles" to divide the workload and share with each other. Carmen stated, "We can all count on each other to help each other out." Through professional challenges, this network also provided support. Carmen explained:

> Even when we have problems, I just feel that connection with others where I feel like I'm not alone in the problem. Everyone is working on it together. We're all facing the problems together. So, I feel all of those connections provide a sense of ease and comfort as well.

This helped "relieve a lot of stress" because she knew that when she worked with her team to resolve a challenge, she would be well supported.

Carmen's professional network helped sustain her as a Latina veteran urban teacher by providing support for her personal and professional life. Additionally, this network helped mold her teaching practice. Through collaboration, Carmen's professional network helped her balance her professional responsibilities.

Clarissa

Clarissa was born in the United States to Mexican immigrant parents. Clarissa described her parents as hard working and determined. She grew up in a Spanish-speaking, family-oriented household in Southern California "in an area where [she] was the only Mexican, the only Latina, and everybody else around [her] was White."

Clarissa taught first through third grades for 24 years at the same elementary school in River City Elementary School District. She served on various committees at her site, including Grade Level Leadership, Student Support Team, Parent Teacher Association, School Site Council, and Observation Protocol for Academic Literacies Site Team. In addition, she was a support provider for the district's induction program for new teachers.

Schooling: No Less, No More

Clarissa had positive, supportive teachers in school that she recalled warmly. She was identified as an ELL and remembered being pulled from mainstream instruction by a resource teacher, Mrs. Rockwell, during third and fourth grade. Mrs. Rockwell would teach her how to "read, write, and speak in English." When describing this memory Clarissa shared that although she was only one of two students who received this intervention, Mrs. Rockwell "made it okay for me to be different and she made me feel comfortable enough to where I would take risks." Clarissa felt genuinely cared for by Mrs. Rockwell and, for this reason, she stood out to her as one of the teachers who had a lasting impact on her education.

Clarissa was a minority in her community and classroom, because of her Mexican background and limited English skills, but her schooling experiences were mostly positive. She remembered school fondly, mainly because of teachers who demonstrated that they cared about

her and supported her learning. As we continued discussing her journey to teaching, it was evident that these teachers became the models that she attempted to replicate as a new teacher.

Journey to Urban Teaching: Your Purpose Finds You

Clarissa's journey into urban teaching was not intentional. She explained how teaching went from being "just a temporary thing" to the reason "why God put [her] on this planet." She had graduated from college with a degree in communications with a public relations emphasis, however, she realized that this was not the career she wanted to continue after completing three internships in the field. She hesitantly took a substitute teaching job at her cousin's suggestion while she "figured out what [she] was going to do with the rest of [her] life."

Clarissa reluctantly started subbing while she worked on finding her true professional path in life. When discussing those first experiences as a substitute she stated:

I was there for three months and yeah, I pretty much used the strategies that my teachers would use that I remember from school, you know, when I was in third grade. It was a third-grade class. . . . I went and did other long terms, and it was like it came easy and everybody, all the principals, that I would go to like loved me and totally encouraged me. And I'm like, "You guys really? This isn't very hard. Are you sure you're not just saying, you know, just to be nice?"

After several successful subbing assignments and with the encouragement of multiple administrators, she began to entertain the idea of turning teaching into her lifelong career. She stated that because of the praise she was receiving from administrators she started thinking "that maybe [she] was born to teach but didn't really know it." Once she decided that she was interested in pursuing a teaching career, she found a position and began her credential program.

I got hired without my credential. That's when they were desperate for teachers. The principal loved me, set me up for an interview. I got hired and then I went into the credential program with already having my class. So, kind of did things backwards. But yeah, I think it was, you know, like I tell my own kids, my own daughter, it's not you finding your purpose. Your purpose finds you.

Clarissa's journey into teaching was unexpected, but she found that teaching was her purpose all along. She stated, "never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I was going to be a teacher, but now it's hard to imagine myself doing anything else other than being a teacher."

Twenty-four years later in her career, Clarissa had come full circle and became a mentor to other teachers through her district's induction program and by serving as a master teacher for student teachers. She stated that although her goal was to "retire as a teacher," she also had aspirations to "teach classroom management [at the college level] because [she] felt like [she was] really good at it." As a veteran urban teacher, Clarissa was aware of the strengths she had developed over the years and hoped to use those strengths not just with her own students, but with novice teachers.

Sustaining in Urban Teaching: Fulfilling

Reflecting on her career as an urban teacher, Clarissa described it as fulfilling. She explained that being a teacher fulfilled her "soul" and her "purpose" by giving her the opportunity to "be a role model and [do] good onto others."

Being an Asset. One of the main reasons why Clarissa felt fulfilled in her career and chose to remain in an urban school district was because she wanted to teach where she felt that

she was an asset. Given her own background as a Latina, she explained why teaching in a majority Latina/o school district was important to her:

> I feel if I were to teach like somewhere closer to my house, I wouldn't be such an asset as I am where I teach because I speak the language, you know. And, like I said, I've built those relationships with families. . . . I try to make those connections with the kids and the parents to where I feel like I make them feel comfortable and you know we help each other out. Honestly, that's why I haven't left.

By teaching in a majority Latina/o school district, Clarissa felt that her cultural and linguistic background, along with her personal experiences, were more valuable to the community that she served than to a community that did not have the same needs. She explained that since she spoke Spanish, she could communicate with parents and "have open dialogue" to develop a "partnership." In consequence. "it's going to be easier for the child to succeed." Clarissa felt that it was part of her "purpose" in life to use her identity and her knowledge to serve others who had a similar background as her.

Shared Identity: Grounded to My Roots. The main reason that Clarissa felt that she was an asset to her students and their families was because she had a shared identity with them. Growing up, she explained that her parents kept her "very grounded to [her] roots and where [her family] came from". She felt a connection with her students as a first-generation Latina whose parents immigrated into the United States without knowing English. Clarissa's parents "started off in a garage" and worked in the fields. She explained that "[she] can make those connections with the kids because [she] did live it". Clarissa often used her own experiences and those of her family to relate to her students and their parents. When discussing future goals with her students,

she would emphasize that "they are [her] and [she] was them," demonstrating the possibilities for their future based on their shared backgrounds.

In addition to sharing an ethnic identity with her students and their parents, she also acknowledged that speaking Spanish greatly helped her with building relationships with parents. She described the benefits of being bilingual stating, "I am able to communicate with [parents] in Spanish, in their language, you know. It just makes it more comfortable for them to approach me. I'm more approachable." Clarissa felt that she was more accessible to parents because they were able to communicate directly with her in their native language. Her efforts to make connections and build relationships with parents contributed to their level of comfortability with her. This empowered parents to ask her about ways they could support their children's education at home because she makes them feel comfortable and they are better able to "help each other out".

Administrator Validation: They Light My Fire. One of Clarissa's great motivators throughout her career was the validation she would receive from her administrators. Her first administrator as a substitute teacher wrote her a letter that served as a motivation for the rest of her career. She stated, "the letter pretty much said that I was born to be a teacher and that I should pursue that." As she began considering teaching as a career, she continued receiving support and praise from the various administrators that would observe her as a substitute teacher. Clarissa explained, "all the principals that I would go to like loved me and totally encouraged me."

In addition to offering direct encouragement, Clarissa also expressed that her administrators validated her indirectly by asking her to take on additional responsibilities outside of her classroom, such as becoming an induction support provider or joining a committee. She

explained that she never "sought" these additional positions on her own. Clarissa clarified why this was significant to her:

> If I'm being asked to be part of a committee, it's because they value my worth. And so, I'm going to take that as a compliment. And again, that feeds my soul and I want to do good for them. I want to do well for them. I want to step it up for them, you know.

> As Clarissa reflected on her tenure and how the validation from administrators helped sustain her throughout her 24-year tenure, she expressed, "Honestly, they light my fire. Like, they motivate me. They encouraged me to want to do more." The support and praise that administrators provided Clarissa from the beginning of her teaching career built her confidence. As she became more experienced, they trusted her to take on leadership roles and responsibilities beyond her classroom, which inspired her to "step up" and continue developing as a professional. Throughout her tenure, Clarissa had multiple administrators that she credits with her success as a teacher.

Professional Network: We All Want for All of Us to Succeed. In addition to validation from administrators, Clarissa also attributed her development and consistency to help from colleagues throughout her career. As a new teacher, her partner teacher "took [her] under her wing" and "really took care of [her]". This gave Clarissa her first experience with peer collaboration. After working at her current site for over 20 years, she described the collaborative "tight knit" school community that she has benefited from. Her grade level team works together planning lessons, preparing materials, and reflecting on instruction. She stated, "it's having those conversations and not just being isolated in my room and doing things by myself."

This culture of collaboration provided Clarissa with a professional network of teachers that she could count on. Eventually some of these professional relationships turned into long term friendships. When describing her teacher friends, Clarissa expressed how "amazing" they each were as professionals and how much she admired them individually as educators. She explained how these personal relationships developed by stating, "I think we valued each other's work ethic and goals and aspirations in our profession, that's how it became a friendship." Developing a professional network of peers who also had a strong work ethic and whom she admired on a professional level contributed to sustaining Clarissa's long-term work. This professional network began to merge with her personal network, helping her develop deeper relationships with these peers. This created a network of support that permeated both her personal and professional lives. Additionally, by surrounding herself with these likeminded colleagues Clarissa felt continuously inspired and supported to continue her work as an urban teacher.

Work Life Balance: 100% at Work and At Home. One of the most evident characteristics of Clarissa's life that she would frequently identify as a contributing factor to her professional sustenance was her intentional practice of "living a well-balanced life". As she reflected on why she has never experienced burnout in her career she explained:

When I'm at work, I give 100% of myself. Like, 100% and I feel good . . . and so, with that said, because I do feel like I give 100% of my myself when I'm there then when I leave walk out of that gate, you know, walk off that campus. . . . I leave it behind because I already gave you 100%, so I'm not going to take you home with me. You know, because when I get [home], I'm going to give 100%. So it's just balance, you know, like everything in life.

Clarissa's ability to maintain this "good balance of work and career and family and fun" was based on what she learned from her parents. Although her parents worked hard during the week and "busted their butt", they made sure to dedicate the weekends to their family and were very hands on.

By being intentional in her practice of work life balance, Clarissa felt a sense of pride in giving her best both in her professional and personal life, as a teacher, parent, and wife. She stated, "I work hard, but once I'm done, I play hard too" and concluded "I think that that is why at 25 years I still love my job and I could still do it". Clarissa's balance helped her prevent felling a sense of burnout and nurtured her continued passion for teaching.

Maria de la Luz

Maria de la Luz was born in the United States in a "very traditional Mexican household." She was the only child of hardworking Mexican immigrant parents who she "[got] along really well with." All of Maria de la Luz's extended family lived in Mexico and she maintained a close connection with them from childhood through adulthood. This further reemphasized her cultural roots as she described herself as being "more Mexican than American." She grew up in a neighboring city to River City Elementary School District until she moved and began eighth grade in River City.

Maria de la Luz taught first-grade in River City Elementary School District for over 15 years. She was a dual language immersion teacher most of her career and taught in two different schools. Maria de la Luz served on her school's School Site Council, School Leadership Team, Safety Committee, Ballet Folklorico Group, Día Del Niño Committee, and Yearbook

Committee. She was also a member of the district's Dual Immersion Steering Committee during the program's developmental years.

Schooling: If You're Not White, You're Not Right.

Maria de la Luz's schooling memories were marked by the evident inequalities in the school system based on students' ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. As she reflected on her memories of interactions with peers, teachers, and other parents she stated, "as much as I think about it now, they really did us a disservice." She felt that the school system had failed her and her Latina/o peers academically and social emotionally.

In elementary school, Maria de la Luz recalled that "schoolwork was not easy for [her]" and she "didn't like it." She especially struggled with reading when she was in her primary years. In addition, she knew that "being bilingual was not a positive thing" and "teachers didn't appreciate it." Speaking Spanish, however, was very important to her and her family. The fact that her heritage language was not valued by her teachers was harmful to her academic progress and made her feel disconnected from her teachers. She did not start "feeling like a reader" until she attended Catechism classes in Spanish for her first communion. At this point, her mom would tell her, "*Lo vas hacer en español pues tienes que leer* (You're going to do it in Spanish, so you have to read)." As she prepared for her first communion, she spent a lot of time reading with her mom and felt that reading in Spanish was "crystal clear" and came more easily to her than English. She also saw how much her parents valued reading since they "always had [their] nose in a book." It was through this process that she "garnered a love for reading." She credited this improvement in her reading to feeling a stronger connection to her parents as she learned how to read with their support. She added that this "was a connection [she] was not making in

school," further demonstrating how the detachment that she felt with her teachers was contributing to her academic challenges. It was evident that when given the opportunity to use her heritage language, she was better able to enjoy learning and make progress.

Maria de la Luz identified the student demographics growing up as "half and half," or half Latinos and half White. She explained that there was a clear distinction in how "the other half" was treated by the adults at school. "They would never take [the Latina/o students'] side" and her and her friends were often blamed for misbehavior that they were not guilty of. Maria de la Luz recalled an incident involving a White peer's mom:

> One of the girls that was in that Anglo group thought we were being mean to her, I remember distinctly. One of the moms was like, "Those cholas!" and we laughed. So, we laughed because we knew what a chola was and we were not that. We watched *novelas* like *Muchachitas* (Latin soap operas like Little Women). Like really? We would laugh because we thought, "Oh no, we're not that, but okay." That's what we looked like.

Reflecting on this incident, Maria de la Luz realized the negative perception that some White adults automatically had of her simply because she was Latina. This parent saw her as a "chola" or a troublemaker. She found this mischaracterization amusing because of how contrary it was in comparison to her innocent personality, as evidenced by her love for teen soap operas at the time. As a result of the language barrier, her and her friends "didn't have the language" to defend themselves when they were blamed for wrongdoing and could not speak up when others were picking on them.

As a third-grader, Maria de la Luz was aware of a common saying among her Latina/o peers that was based on the evident mistreatment of Latina/o students in comparison to White students. She stated:

> Now that I think about it like, that's disgusting that I even knew that in that school. And that was something we talked about, like, if you're not White, you're not right. So, *no eramos güeritas de ojos azules* (we weren't blond haired and blue eyed).

Maria de la Luz and her Latina/o friends were well aware of the disparities in her school. They knew that they looked different from their White peers and that they were being treated unfairly. She stated that she "felt pushed aside" when she was in school because she did not have the "right" "skin color", "surname", and English language skills.

To further highlight the issues in her schooling experience, Maria de la Luz would compare her schooling to what she would observe in Mexico. In Mexico, her grandma and some aunts, uncles, and cousins were teachers or principals. As a child, Maria de la Luz would visit her grandma's classroom and observe her teaching third-grade. She would also hear her family share stories about their teaching and schooling. Through these secondhand schooling experiences with her family in Mexico, she knew that her own experience in the United States was not the norm. She stated, "I knew what it could be and how much they enjoyed [teaching] and then I was living something completely different." These contrasting experiences inspired Maria de la Luz's desire to become a teacher.

Journey to Urban Education: Always Knew I Wanted to be a Teacher.

Despite the negative experiences that Maria de la Luz overcame in school, she "always knew [she] wanted to be a teacher." In fact, these experiences are what motivated her to become

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a teacher for urban students like herself. In junior high and high school these negative experiences continued as she watched her friends fall through the cracks of the school system. She was dedicated to her learning and would often help her friends with their schoolwork. By the time graduation came, six of her friends "had been kicked out of school or dropped out for whatever reason," but Maria de la Luz was "excited" to graduate because she had a "pretty good GPA." The counselor at her school, however, was not supportive of her and her peers' future goals. She remembered when a counselor came to speak to her "basic English" class when she was a junior and told them:

> Most of you, you're not going to go to college. You'll be lucky if you get one of those like technical degrees. So, get your head out of the clouds and think about what you're going to do.

Maria de la Luz recalled this memory passionately, stating:

> And most of that class is who? Latinos, you know? Kids that are learning another language, you know? The ones that need the most support or the most enthusiasm, that maybe don't have parents that know how the educational system works or what the structure is or how you get help and benefits. . . . The more that I revisit that it's heartbreaking to me. And that's why I became a teacher.

This experience, once again, demonstrated to Maria de la Luz that many of the educators that were serving Latina/o students in her schools were not equipped to do so. They lacked "empathy," "respect," and understanding of "why [students] were struggling academically." Consequently, she felt a desire to do something about it and become a teacher herself.

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Although her high school counselor was not helpful in her aspirations to pursue higher education, Maria de la Luz had a great relationship with her band director. He would check in with her to ensure that she was taking the necessary steps to attend college, such as submitting her FAFSA. This relationship assisted her in taking the next step to becoming a teacher.

While in college, Maria de la Luz remembered learning that teachers of color were "rare." One of her professors, who she kept in contact with after becoming a teacher, told her that for her to be a woman of color with a college degree of any kind was "something out of the ordinary." Maria de la Luz was proud of her accomplishments, especially in becoming the teacher that she wished for as a child.

Sustaining in Urban Teaching: Growing

Describing her experience as an urban teacher for over 15 years, Maria de la Luz stated that "growing" was the best word to summarize it. As a teacher, she took pride in being a lifelong learner and always wanting to be the "best" version of herself for her students. She stated, "Growing . . . is the opposite of being stagnant and to me that's really important. The day that I'm doing the same thing over and over again is the day I need to stop." Maria de la Luz acknowledged that continuous growth and development was important for her to meet the diverse needs of her urban students.

Shared Identity: Caring for Your Inner Child. Maria de la Luz maintained her passion for serving urban students by reflecting on her own experiences as a student. She identified with her students' background on many levels, as a Latina, emergent bilingual, and child of immigrants. Maria de la Luz's negative schooling experiences motivated her to be the teacher that she wished she would have had as a student. She stated:

I have a cousin that's like, "*En la psicología mija siempre uno está tratando de cuidar* your inner child, *tu niña chiquita de adentro* [In psychology we are always trying to care for our inner child]." . . . And the reason that I wanted to be [a teacher] in an area that was like the one I grew up in was because I wanted to be that teacher for those children. The teacher that I didn't have. And I wanted to make sure that I gave them what I didn't have. And I gave them better than what I had because if you know better, you do better. So, I know better because I know what it's like to be on the other side.

Maria de la Luz wanted to serve students like herself and give them the positive schooling experience that she wanted for herself as a child. She especially wanted to serve "those children," or children of color who were emergent bilinguals like she was. She felt that her shared cultural and linguistic identity with her students helped her "know better" as a teacher since she was once in their shoes.

Maria de la Luz identified numerous reasons why urban students deserved teachers who resembled their cultural backgrounds stating:

I wish I had been a student in my class. I wish I had been a student in my friends' classes. I think it would have given me a lot more to look up to, to see somebody that looked like me, that spoke like me, that could talk to my mom and understood where I was coming from. That had empathy for us, that had respect for us, that understood why we were struggling academically. That could make connections with us. Like, that respect. I just feel like we, and I include my little friends in it, mis *amiguitas*. . . . Like there was none of that.

Maria de la Luz emphasized that teachers who have shared cultural backgrounds with their students, like her and her teacher friends did, innately promoted better treatment of students and their families. She felt that their lived experiences helped them better understand their students culturally and, as a result, they were better able to support them. Additionally, she explained that these teachers would expose students to positive role models that resembled their background. Maria de la Luz spoke in advocacy not just for herself, but for her Latina friends growing up who did not graduate high school due to the challenges they faced and the support they were denied in the education system.

Speaking specifically about shared language, she restated the importance of having teachers who spoke the same heritage language as students. She expressed that as a student she would have felt more "empowered and more sure of [herself]" having teachers who spoke Spanish so she could communicate more easily knowing that they understood her. As a dual language immersion teacher, Maria de la Luz promoted the importance of bilingualism and maintaining students' heritage languages.

Professional Network: *Las Primas*. Maria de la Luz developed a close-knit network of friends who were also dual language immersion teachers. This bond was established through shared challenges as they developed the dual language immersion program in the district and experienced "a lot of pushback" from some colleagues and community members. She recalled getting "dirty looks" from other staff because "they hated us." The program was not well received by other teachers and community members who would tell Maria de la Luz and her friends that what they were doing was "illegal" and "the worst thing you could do to those kids here in America." In addition to this "drama," she explained that dual language immersion

teachers were given temporary contracts for over six years, which was another source of stress because each year they were uncertain of whether they would a have a job the following year. During this challenging time, Maria de la Luz credits her friends with helping her through it stating, "They had a lot to do with why I didn't quit." As the program grew and more dual language immersion teachers were added to her site, she began to build her network. She recalled:

> There were a lot of tears and I don't think it got any easier until there were more teachers on staff that were [teaching dual language immersion]. . . . So, when that group started to form. . . . I think because we lived through something really difficult together. We lived through a lot of pushback. We lived through a lot of misunderstanding. I mean it was a lot of drama and we became this little group, you know. And thankfully, and we've been able to try to keep it. It kept our sanity. And so now we even call each other family. *Ay somos las primas*, (oh we're cousins) that kind of thing. And so, I don't think I would have survived without them.

Maria de la Luz's professional network provided her with a system of support during the first years of her career. Since her friends were also dual language immersion teachers, they were undergoing the same challenges as her and could relate. They were a "safe place" where she could vent when she was experiencing a lot of stress. Once there was a group of them, they began to collaborate on ways to respond to these challenges as a unit, including seeking support from administrators, advocating at school board meetings, and strategizing responses to negative colleagues. As years passed, this professional network became part of her personal network, acquiring the nickname "*las primas* (the cousins)," demonstrating the family-like bond they

developed. Maria de la Luz would spend time outside of work with her teacher friends attending concerts, sharing meals, and going to happy hours.

Professionally, this network also helped Maria de la Luz build "healthy" work habits. Early in her career, she would often "leave [campus] with the custodian" late at night as she prepared for the next day. Maria de la Luz credited a "more experienced" peer with teaching her how to create more balance in her work schedule:

> She showed me you can let things just go . . . everything doesn't have to be so perfect. Not that my work suffered from it, it didn't. It just made me be more balanced in how I spent my time. And so, you know, we would tell each other, "We're going to work until this time and then we're out of here." And so, we'd walk out together. So that was also really helpful. When I met her, that was kind of hard at the beginning to be like, that's okay. But I saw that I still got everything done.

At the end of each school year, Maria de la Luz would plan "late days" with this colleague to prepare their classrooms for Open House. They would add "social time," like a coffee run or a shared meal, to provide a fun break. This colleague became a sort of accountability partner, helping her maintain balance with work and her personal time.

Maria de la Luz identified her professional network as a great contributing factor in sustaining her throughout her tenure as an urban teacher. They provided emotional support, professional collaboration, and social interactions that helped her through the years.

Paula

Paula grew up in an urban city that neighbors River City Elementary School District. Paula was raised in a Spanish speaking household by her mom with "lots of people living in one

household," including her aunt, uncle, and cousins. She was raised to value her bilingualism, stating that her mom expressed how important it was to speak English and Spanish. The area that she lived in as a child was "heavily impacted by gangs."

Paula's husband was a high school teacher in an urban school and her two children attended the same school that she taught in. Paula taught for over 14 years, 13 of which have been in RCESD. She started her career in the district as a Teacher on Special Assignment and worked most of her career as a dual language immersion teacher. Paula also served as a co-advisor for her site's Ballet Folklorico Dance Group, Student Support Team member, and Parent Outreach Committee member.

Schooling: Lack of Connection with Teachers

Paula was a product of an urban school system herself. She felt grateful to have had good, caring teachers throughout her education, however, she never felt connected to those teachers because they did not share her identity or heritage language. Paula explained, "I had to be that student that would sit down and have to translate for my mom during a conference and there was like no connection between the teacher and the parent." For Paula, the fact that her mom was unable to directly communicate with her teachers further highlighted this disconnect.

The only time that Paula recalls developing a genuine connection with a teacher was in third grade. She recalled that her teacher would "challenge" her and her peers to learn using "fun activities" that she still remembered. Although her teacher was a White male and did not share her background, he still tried to develop a relationship with Paula and her family. Paula shared that she invited him to her birthday party because she enjoyed his class so much. Describing this memory, she stated:

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He came! And it was like oh my gosh! *Ves a un maestro Americano* (you see a White teacher) and he brings his little boy with him and he's coming to my house *en el barrio* (in my neighborhood)! It was like, I never expected it. But that impacted me so much! . . . And he was there with my dad, talking to my dad, talking to my mom, and my family and it was just like wow! You know? That was like the only time that I've ever experienced that.

Paula's third-grade teacher left a lifelong impression on her. His ability to build a relationship with Paula and her parents, even though he did not share the same cultural background, demonstrated his care for Paula not just as a student, but as a person. This further confirmed to Paula that the rest of her teachers, although they were caring, "had something missing." They lacked a genuine connection with their Latina/o students and their families. She explained:

It's just building those connections with the families. And I, besides that one time, I don't think I've ever had that or that my mom ever felt comfortable to go and approach my teacher with a question. Like, that didn't happen.

Paula's experiences as a student inspired her to be the teacher that she felt she and her family needed growing up. Her third-grade teacher served as a role model of who she aspired to be as a teacher. For Paula, developing personal connections with students and families was critical. This became the motivation for her to become an urban schoolteacher who was representative of the students and families that she served.

Journey to Urban Education: Representing Urban Students

Paula's dream as she pursued higher education was to return to serve as a teacher in the same district and elementary school that she attended as a child. She stated, "I just always felt like I really wanted to go back, like many of us, and give back to our own community." When she started student teaching in River City, she found that the student and family demographics were much like those of her native city. She stated that "[she] saw a lot of the same needs, a lot of the same students" and because of these similarities she felt at home. Paula's desire to serve in an urban community was present from the beginning of her career and persisted into her veterancy.

Sustaining in Urban Teaching: Passion

Throughout all the challenges that Paula faced as an urban educator, she identified her passion as being the one constant. Reflecting on what sustained her for so long despite feeling "overwhelmed" or "stressed out" at times she expressed, "You have your highs and lows, but I think the passion is what just keeps going." Paula felt that being an urban teacher was "part of [her] identity," which was rooted in her passion for serving and representing urban families in education.

Shared Identity: Representation. Being the child of Mexican immigrant parents and an emergent bilingual student, Paula greatly identified with her students and their families. Much of Paula's passion for urban education stemmed from this shared identity. Because of her own experiences as a student, Paula "wanted to make sure that [she] would be able to represent what many of our urban students look like and for them to be able to see someone like themselves" leading a classroom. Paula wanted her students to realize their own potential by serving as a role

model. Paula used her shared identity to develop strong connections with students and their parents.

Paula's own background as a Latina and bilingual emergent student informed her practice as a veteran teacher. She stated, "I feel like now as an urban teacher I'm there to support my students so much and build those connections beyond the classroom." Since she never had this connection with her own teachers growing up, she prioritized relationship building in her classroom.

Paula explained that her mom raised her to be proud of her bilingualism and in school she "never felt like it was something that was like a stigma or something bad." Now as an adult, however, she realized that this experience was not true for all emergent bilingual students. Her husband immigrated to the United States as a teenager and his experience in school as an emergent bilingual student was not as positive as Paula's. As a dual language immersion teacher, Paula made a conscious effort to highlight the "importance of being bilingual" and the value of learning two languages in school in order to promote a positive self-image in her emergent bilingual students.

Paula also connected culturally with her urban students in various ways in order to instill an understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures. In collaboration with colleagues, she organized annual schoolwide Día de los Muertos events and Christmas posadas and taught the folklorico dance group. Additionally, Paula created lessons centered around culture and heritage. For example, she shared a lesson in which the objective was for students to learn more about how they were named by their parents and how their names connected to their individual histories. She shared her own experience of being "made fun of in school because the teachers

could not pronounce [her] name" and the fact that she disliked her name as a child because of this. As an adult she realized the "value" and the "significance" of her name and wanted to instill that same sense of pride in her students who also had traditional names. Paula further acknowledged that because she taught in a Spanish dual language immersion program, the focus tends to be around Hispanic/Latino culture. Understanding the importance of representation, she would "also think of the diversity in [her] classroom" and incorporate other cultures into her instruction so that students "do not feel that they're being left out" because their culture is not "talked" about.

On a personal level, Paula tried to "build those connections beyond the classroom" with her students and their families. She attended birthday parties and special events whenever she was invited. She stated, "I go because to me it was like, that's the one thing that I always held on to and if I can do that or somebody else, then I'm going to do it." She explained this in reference to her third-grade teacher, the only educator in her schooling career that she felt a connection with.

Paula's ability to empathize and connect with her students was a result of her shared identity. She could tailor instruction to meet students' linguistic and cultural needs because she had experienced many of these needs herself as a child and felt a personal responsibility to provide better educational experiences for her students than what was provided to her. Paula also felt this responsibility to connect with her students' parents.

Paula acknowledged that the lack of connection that she had with her own teachers was also missing between her parents and her teachers due to cultural and linguistic barriers. When reflecting on how this motivated her to be a teacher, she expressed:

There was like no connection between the teacher and the parent. And so, it's just like, no, I don't want that to always be like the norm, I guess. So, I just felt like that need. And that's what I wanted to do.

Paula realized from a young age that the lack of communication and connection between her parents and her teachers was an issue and she wanted to be part of the solution. As a Latina urban teacher, she prioritized forming these connections "beyond the classroom" with her students' families because "I don't think I've ever had that or that my mom ever felt comfortable to go and approach my teacher with a question." She realized that having a shared identity gave her an advantage because she could directly communicate with parents, and they felt comfortable going to her for support. Describing her own success as a teacher with forming these strong connections with parents, she expressed:

> So, I feel like with me, it's like oh my gosh a *veces es mucha confianza* (sometimes it is a lot of trust)! You know, it's like you get messages left and right and about like really random things sometimes. But you're like okay. You know that you're building that relationship and they feel comfortable enough to ask you.

Parents felt comfortable approaching Paula with questions related to their child's education as well as with reaching out for help on unrelated topics. This was a stark contrast to the schooling experiences that she and her parents had when she was a student and, consequently, she appreciated that she was able to build that trust and support parents.

Personal Network: I'm Blessed. One of the major contributing factors that Paula discussed as contributing to sustaining her as a veteran urban teacher was her personal network. She stated that she has "a big support system" that helps her at home, which "maybe some other

teachers don't have." Because Paula's husband was also an urban teacher, she explained that "he kind of understands what it's like and what we're going through together." Paula felt that her husband could relate to the challenges of being an urban teacher since he also shared those experiences himself. Additionally, Paula's in laws and her mom helped with her children's schooling. She recognized the added stressors of being a working mom during the pandemic and having to juggle teaching and supporting her own children from home simultaneously, but explained that she gets a lot of help from her mother-in-law:

> They're supposed to go through this distance learning as I'm working and I'm teaching and doing my job. She's the one that's out there having to navigate logging them into Microsoft. . . . I like I feel like if I did not have that I wouldn't be able to put in the amount of hours that I do into my lessons or preparing for the next day because then I would be the one that would have to do that. So it's like a big support.

> Paula's mom would also help by attending school events for Paula's children on her behalf and by picking them up on days when Paula needed to stay longer after school hours. Expressing her gratitude for all the help that she gets with her children, Paula stated "I just feel I'm very, very blessed and fortunate that I do have that network."

> Furthermore, Paula emphasized that her personal network is not just helpful and supportive. She explained that she has a "stable" personal life because of her family and that this was a great advantage for her as a teacher because "if [she] would have stress at home and stress at work, then [she doesn't] know how [she] would be able to manage those two things." The fact that Paula's personal network was not a source of stress, allowed her to better mitigate the stressors of teaching. Similarly, her professional network provided additional support.

Professional Network: *Las Latinas Somos Muy Unidas*. Another part of Paula's

support system as a veteran urban teacher was based in her professional network. Paula worked

at the same school site for 13 years. During this time, the bonds she created with colleagues

made them "like family". As a founding teacher of RCESD's Spanish dual language immersion

program, Paula had built particularly "strong friendships" with her dual language immersion, or

DLI, colleagues. She stated:

> I think it goes beyond just *ser una colega pero ser unas amistades* (being a colleague but
>
> being a friend). And they're the ones that get you through everything because they're the
>
> ones that are going through it with you. That have had this experience with you.

> The strong relationships that Paula and her DLI developed was initiated by shared

challenges. She explained that it took a while for other teachers at her site to "accept" her and her

DLI peers:

> I always felt like a division, like we felt like these teachers were not happy with us. They
>
> felt that we were coming after their jobs. They didn't understand what we were doing.
>
> They didn't agree with what we were doing. And they would make it known.

> This feeling of rejection created a stronger bond between DLI teachers as they relied on

each other for emotional support. Paula explained that these bonds "helped sustain [her]

motivation" because "it's really hard to be on your own." As a result of the nature of the Spanish

DLI program, Paula's professional network was composed of Latina teachers. She stated:

No sé porque, pero las Latinas somos muy unidas. (I don't know why but Latinas are very

united.) We just support each other. And I feel like that's the thing that keeps us in or has kept

me in.

Paula acknowledged that the bond within her professional network was based on shared experiences as DLI teachers as well as on a shared culture. Much like with her students and their parents, Paula valued the cultural connection that she had with her peers. Paula's professional network helped validate her experiences as a new DLI teacher and sustained her motivation to continue into veterancy.

This network continued to develop and grow over many years. Aside from providing emotional support and encouragement, they would frequently collaborate. As the DLI program grew across the district, Paula's network also grew to include teachers from other school sites "because they don't find that collaboration in their own schools." Paula explained that they would share ideas, brainstorm, provide feedback, and work on lessons together. She also attended professional opportunities with colleagues and completed her masters with another teacher from her site. Paula's professional network provided encouragement that supported her continued growth as a teacher.

Penelope

Penelope was born in the United States to Mexican immigrant parents. She was raised in an urban city that neighbors River City Elementary School District. Watching her mom and dad working long hours instilled in her a strong work ethic that helped her pursue higher education. She attributed her family and church community as the role models that molded her.

Penelope's husband also worked in education as a high school psychologist in an urban school district. He grew up in the same city as Penelope and they attended the same high school. Penelope shared that both her and her husband share a commitment to serving urban students.

Penelope taught for over 14 years in two school districts, including years as an after-school program assistant, intervention teacher, bilingual program teacher, and classroom teacher in fourth and fifth grades. She also served as an AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) lead teacher, Red Ribbon Week Committee leader, and School News Committee producer. Additionally, Penelope was a support provider for the district's beginning teacher induction program.

Schooling: They Just Didn't Get It

Penelope remembered her schooling experiences with mixed emotions. She expressed that she "didn't feel connected to a lot of [her] teachers" growing up. In elementary school her teachers were "sweet" and "friendly", but she did not recall any teachers that stood out to her either positively or negatively.

Once she entered junior high and high school, however, Penelope recalled various teachers who expressed themselves negatively towards their students. While discussing her high school experience, she recalled a specific incident with an English teacher:

I remember talking to my friends. We were having a conversation in class and we were talking in Spanish and [the teacher] came up to us and she said, "You girls need to start speaking in English. In this classroom we speak English."

Reflecting on that experience, Penelope said she felt "ashamed" because this teacher "was putting [her] language and [her] culture down." This teacher's reaction to Penelope and her friends speaking Spanish in class showed Penelope that she did not value her heritage language and, consequently, she did not value her cultural background and her identity beyond that of

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being a student in her English class. This exemplified the lack of connection that Penelope felt throughout her schooling with teachers.

Penelope felt that many of her teachers were unable to connect with her and her urban peers because "they just didn't get it." In other words, they lacked the cultural perspective to be able to relate to their urban students and made no effort to develop an understanding. Instead, teachers would make assumptions about their students and place the blame on them. While discussing these teachers, Penelope stated:

I had teachers who sometimes would just straight up, tell the kids, "Hey, you guys aren't going to be successful if you don't try" or, you know, just things that could have been worded differently. Especially for kids that grew up in a community with inequalities. There's a lot of factors involved. Maybe they were doing poorly in school for whatever reason.

Penelope felt that these teachers' failed attempts to "motivate" students were because they did not have the "right lenses" and were blind to the "real issues" that students were facing. They were unaware of or dismissed the inequities that their urban students faced and, alternatively, concluded that students were simply not trying hard enough. Additionally, because of these "wrong lenses" these teachers were unable to support their students in overcoming these inequities.

On a schoolwide level, this notion was further illustrated. Penelope noted that counselors did not encourage students to pursue higher education, however, military recruiters were frequently on campus. These observations showed Penelope the path that her school had

projected for her and her peers. Luckily, Penelope had the support of educators outside of her school site and parents who encouraged her to pursue higher education.

Journey to Urban Education: Recognizing the Importance of Closing the Education Gap

Penelope "never really saw [herself] as a teacher" because she did not feel connected to her own teachers growing up. She did not consider a career in teaching "early on" because of the absence of positive teacher role models throughout her schooling.

Penelope stated that her church mentors were the ones that "really motivated [her] the most" and helped her "persevere" to pursue higher education. Although many of her church mentors were educators, none of them worked at the schools that she attended, so she did not see them in their roles as educators firsthand. It was their support and guidance through church that assisted her.

A year after graduating from high school, one of Penelope's church mentors, who was also the principal of an elementary school, encouraged Penelope to apply for a job as an after-school program assistant at her school site in Penelope's home city. Remembering this mentor's encouragement, Penelope stated, "She really was one of those people that just pushed me and said, 'Hey you know you work here at the church. You do Vacation Bible School. I think you should give this a try.'" This experience as an after-school program assistant provided Penelope with her first experience managing a whole class of students and providing curriculum-based instruction.

In college, Penelope formed relationships with peers from "a more privileged upbringing" and through these relationships began developing her awareness of the educational and social inequities in urban communities. She stated:

A lot of the kids that I grew up with, both parents had to work. Parents didn't have enough income to provide like tutoring or even like you know extracurricular activities as opposed to kids who had those opportunities. So, seeing that and seeing how important it is to close the education gap . . . was crucial and important to me.

Penelope's preliminary teaching experience as an after-school program assistant and her developing consciousness around educational inequities inspired her to become a teacher. Further, she developed a passion for urban school teaching as she recognized "how important it is to close the education gap" for urban communities.

Sustaining in Urban Teaching: Mission and Purpose

Penelope felt that everyone has a purpose in life and that she was fulfilling her "mission" and "purpose" through her profession as an urban teacher, which contributed to sustaining her dedication to urban students throughout her career. While explaining this Penelope stated, "I feel that God called me to work with children and urban communities to be a role model for students and their families [because] that's where he knew I would be utilized the most". Penelope's mission was to "create change" and "impact the lives of [her] students and their families in a positive way." She acknowledged the advantage of her shared identity in being able to better connect and build relationships with students and families from urban communities.

Shared Identity: It's My Comfort Zone. Penelope's personal background resembled that of her urban students. She was raised by immigrant parents in a "predominantly Latino urban community" that was "low SES," and her first language was Spanish. She stated that because of this, serving as a teacher in an urban community was "kind of like [her] comfort zone" since "that's the world [she] grew up in".

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Penelope drew on this advantage by sharing her personal background and family story with her students and their families from the beginning of the year. She explained that by sharing this she was able to demonstrate that "[she could] relate to a lot of the issues that come up in the community" in order to develop immediate connections with parents. As a result, "parents just [felt] comfortable to approach [her]" because she spoke their language and shared the same cultural and family values as them. She identified this as a critical part of the partnership that she developed with parents to ensure that they "also participate in their students' education".

Penelope also used this shared identity in the classroom to develop relationships with her students. She stated that she discusses "culture" and "common practices" to demonstrate that she "can relate to a lot of a lot of what they go through, what they celebrate, or their values with their family" to build strong relationships with students.

This shared identity also served Penelope in embedding linguistic and cultural connections within her instruction. She shared an instructional unit that she covers each year focused on family heritage. The goals of this unit were to "learn about and deepen [students'] understanding about their culture and where they come from" and to develop their appreciation for the "commonalities" and "uniqueness" of each family's heritage. Additionally, Penelope stated that she wanted her students to "take honor and pride in where we come from." This was a stark contrast to Penelope's own experience as a student when she was made to feel ashamed of her cultural and linguistic background. Given her experiences, Penelope made conscious efforts to meet the social, behavioral, and academic needs of her urban students.

Understanding Needs: Having the Right Lens. As a Latina urban teacher, Penelope felt that her shared identity with her students gave her the "right lens," or an advantage to being "a better educator" who understood and could address the needs of her urban students. She stated: So, I think recognizing the inequalities in urban communities is important because you know you acknowledge them, and you try to do your best to help the problem and to close those gaps that you know others who may not have those lenses may not be able to do so because they don't bring up the issues or things that are relevant to that community.

Penelope recognized that she was uniquely equipped to recognize the multiple factors that impact the needs of her urban students in a way that other teachers may not be simply because of her personal background and experiences. She expressed that as a Latina it was important that she "represent [her] community" and considered "all the systematic issues" that present added challenges for students in urban communities. For example, Penelope explained the importance of not passing judgement and, instead, seeking to better understand students by identifying underlying factors that impact learning. She stated, "If I see that a student is struggling or if he or she is just not motivated and not putting their best effort, then I check in with them and I do call home and make sure that everything's okay and ask parents how I can support them." Acknowledging that urban students have "many distractions" that can impact their classroom behaviors, Penelope sought to build relationships with students and families to gain insight on how she could best serve her students' personal needs and, consequently, help them make academic progress.

Personal Network: Fortunate. Penelope credited her personal network for "encouraging [her] from day one" throughout her journey into teaching and for supporting her in her career as

an urban teacher. At home, Penelope was "fortunate to have supportive parents who encouraged [her] to go to college" and pursue her goals. Some of Penelope's church mentors were "actual educators" and made a "connection" with her, which helped her persevere in school and inspired her to become a teacher. As an adult, Penelope continued to count on this personal network of support.

Further, Penelope's husband was also an urban educator. She stated that her and her husband were "like minded" in that they wanted to "continue building up [their] communities, the schools that [they] work with, the students that [they] work with." Having this shared goal as a couple helped Penelope sustain her commitment to urban teaching.

Penelope stated, "I feel fortunate to have the life that I have" and explained how her personal network helped her stay dedicated as an urban teacher, while also helping her balance the challenges by providing her with a break from the "daily routine". During family gatherings, Penelope explained that they would often discuss education topics "because most of [her] family members on [her] husband's side are all educators". She stated:

> We can talk about things that come up, whether it's in the district or the state, things that are constantly changing in education. And so, you know, we laugh about it and we support each other. Like we just . . . we're there for the kids at the end of the day. There are certain things that we can't change. You know, whether it's policies that, you know, change in education . . . so, we talk about our multiple experiences in education, and we just support each other.

These conversations with family provided Penelope with an outlet to share her professional experiences and to obtain reassurance about shared challenges with other educators.

Family conversations also supported her in sustaining her dedication to her students despite challenges.

Professional Network: Teacher Friends. Penelope also had the support of her "teacher friends" who she described as a "community of educators who are not just educators but also close friends." This network provided her with professional and personal support. Professionally, she would collaborate with them to plan instruction and problem solve to support students when challenges arose. Reflecting on who composed this professional network, Penelope stated:

A lot of the close friends that I've made in the profession have also come from similar backgrounds as me and we've had similar experiences seeing, you know, the inequalities in education that unfortunately happen in urban communities for many different factors. So having these open conversations with these teachers I think reinforces the purpose of why we do what we do.

Penelope developed friendships with colleagues who were from a similar background as her and her urban students. These educators were also dedicated to serving urban communities, which supported Penelope by motivating her to continue working towards being a "great teacher for the interest and the benefit of our students." Surrounding herself with other urban teachers who had a strong commitment to urban education helped sustain her own passion.

This professional network also provided personal support for Penelope during "difficult moments" in life. She explained that there were times where she felt that she "wasn't putting [her] best effort" as a teacher due to personal circumstances, but her teacher friends were supportive. They helped her so that she did not feel like she "had to do it all". Penelope's

professional network helped her mitigate professional responsibilities as she overcame personal

challenges.

Summary of *Testimonios*

Latina veteran urban teachers' individual *testimonios* provide personal accounts of their

experiences from childhood through adulthood. These critical narratives serve to increase our

understanding of the personal and professional factors that sustained these teachers in urban

teaching. Table 13 summarizes the topical themes from each *testimonio,* categorized by

participants' experiences in schooling, their journey to a profession in education, and factors that

helped them sustain in urban teaching.

Table 13

Analysis of Testimonios by Topical Theme

Participant	Schooling	Journey to Education	Sustaining in Urban Teaching
Bella	Not Just Another Student	Pass the Baton	Amor al Prójimo
			Proving Others Wrong
			I Want Them to Have the Best Teacher
Carmen	Hard Work Ethic	My Dream Was to be Like Them	Common Ground
			Building Community with Parents
			We Can All Count on Each Other
Clarissa	No Less, No More	Your Purpose Finds You	Being an Asset
			Grounded to My Roots
			We all Want Us to Succeed
			100% At Work and at Home
Maria de la Luz	If You're Not White, You're Not Right	Always Knew I Wanted to Be a Teacher	Caring for Your Inner Child
			More to Look Up To
			Las Primas
Paula	Lack of Connection with Teachers	Representing Urban Students	Representation
			I'm Blessed
			Las Latinas Somos Muy Unidas
Penelope	Teachers Just Didn't Get It	Recognizing the Importance of Closing the Education Gap	It's My Comfort Zone
			Having the Right Lens
			Fortunate
			Teacher Friends

The *testimonios* provided an in-depth recollection of each participant's individual history as a Latina veteran urban teacher, identifying different personal and professional factors that sustained them through their years of service. In the next section, a cross-case analysis of these themes will be presented to analyze the collective experiences of Latina veteran urban teachers.

Conclusion

Through their individual *testimonios,* six Latina veteran urban teachers shared their personal and professional experiences in education as well as the backstories that led them to teaching. Their schooling experiences demonstrated that their *chispa,* or spark, for urban education was present within them from the time they were children. Through their journey to urban teaching and other personal and professional factors as adults, they were able to effectively maintain their *chispa* throughout their careers. The next chapter will provide a cross-case analysis of the findings discovered through participants' *testimonios.*

CHAPTER 5

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

To synthesize the findings from the *testimonios,* a cross case analysis was conducted.

This second phase of data analysis included refining, deleting, and combining codes on Dedoose

to ensure precision. Then, additional rounds of coding and rereading lead to the organization of

codes into categories as emerging themes were identified. These emerging themes are explained

in this chapter as a collective interpretation of Latina veteran urban teachers' experiences. These

findings are listed and defined on Table 14.

Table 14

Cross-Case Analysis Findings

Finding	Significance	Definition
Encendiendo la chispa (Igniting the spark)	Commitment to urban students	Teachers feel a sense of responsibility to making a difference in the lives of urban students, view themselves as an asset to urban communities based on their shared identity with urban students, and consider urban teaching to be their passion.
Alimentando la chispa (Fueling the spark)	Dedication to professional growth plateauing	Teachers demonstrate commitment to continuous improvement in their professional practice through regular participation in professional development opportunities, participation in leadership opportunities, collaboration with peers, and active resistance to.
Preservando la chispa (Preserving the spark)	Strong personal and professional networks	Teachers develop groups of individuals from their personal and professional lives who provide them with support in various manners in both their personal and professional contexts.

Latina veteran urban teachers were sustained in their practice by various personal and

professional factors. Maria de la Luz coined this as "*la chispa* (the spark)" that kept her going as

a veteran urban teacher. She explained, "You need to have that *chispa*, you know. *¿Si no que*

estás haciendo allí? (You need to have that spark, you know. If not, what are you still doing

there?)" Similarly, other participants identified the need to sustain their "passion," "excitement," and "drive." The *chispa* for urban teaching was sustained by three main factors. Latina veteran urban teachers sustained their *chispa* through their commitment to urban students, dedication to professional growth, and strong personal and professional networks. The following sections will delve deeper into each of these findings.

Encendiendo la Chispa: Commitment to Urban Students

Latina veteran urban teachers' *chispa* was ignited by their commitment to serving urban students, especially Latina/o students. This was the primary sustaining factor that helped these teachers remain in urban schools. They all expressed making an intentional choice to serve in urban schools due to their shared identity, or shared cultural and linguistic background, with the student population that they served. This commitment to urban students was what initially ignited their spark since it stemmed from their personal backgrounds and experiences. This commitment was demonstrated in numerous ways.

Sense of Responsibility

These Latina veteran urban teachers felt a sense of responsibility to urban students and families based on their shared identity and their own experiences as students in the schooling process. All participants were raised in Spanish speaking households by immigrant parents. Carmen stated that working with urban families was "a great reflection of where [she] grew up." The participants emphasized the fact that they shared a cultural and linguistic background with their predominantly Latina/o student population. Clarissa would tell her students, "You are me and I was you." Sharing this cultural and linguistic identity with students provided these teachers with a sense of responsibility to serving urban communities because they felt the need to help

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students like themselves and families like their own. Maria de la Luz referenced a psychological need to care for her "inner child" by serving Latina/o students who were just like her.

This sense of responsibility also stemmed from these teachers' schooling experiences, both the good and the bad. For Bella, Carmen, and Clarissa, their positive experiences as students inspired their dreams to become teachers and to give back what they had received. Carmen stated, "I had really great teachers, growing up and it was pretty much my dream as a child to be like them." Bella shared the same sentiment describing all her teachers as "amazing" and "encouraging," which motivated her to become a teacher in order to "apply the same thing in the classroom." Each of these three Latina veteran urban teachers recalled at least one teacher who left a lasting impression on them as children. Clarissa remembered her third-grade resource teacher for making her feel "comfortable" despite her being only one of two students in her class who was still developing her English language skills. Bella discussed how her sixth-grade teacher "took particular interest in her students" and got to know all about her, her background, and her family, which made her wonder, "If that's what happened with one person. What can I do with a group of 30 if I'm just as encouraging and nurturing?" Bella's, Carmen's, and Clarissa's positive schooling experiences as urban youth inspired in them a desire to pay it forward by providing the same experience for other urban students.

Not all Latina veteran urban teachers experienced this positivity in schooling, however. Maria de la Luz and Penelope had mostly negative school memories. Their sense of responsibility to urban communities stemmed from their desire to become the teachers they wished they would have had as children. Maria de la Luz remembered that in elementary her and her Latina/o peers were already aware of the phrase "if you're not White, you're not right." This

was based on the clear distinction between how Latina/o and White students were treated by teachers. Penelope shared that most teachers did not know how to adequately serve an urban student population and would directly tell Latina/o students, "You guys aren't going to be successful if you don't try."

In addition to the ethnic and cultural bias they experienced in school, these two teachers also felt that their bilingualism was viewed as a deficit. Penelope was made to feel "ashamed" of speaking Spanish when a teacher told her and her friends, "You girls need to start speaking English. In this classroom we speak English." Reflecting on this experience, Penelope stated:

I just vowed to never be that kind of teacher. . . . I think no one should ever demean your language or your culture, so I think those are moments that I will never forget because they're motivators for me to continue working in urban communities.

Penelope found a sense of responsibility to provide a schooling experience that valued the diverse cultures and languages of her urban students. Maria de la Luz shared that she also knew that speaking Spanish was not "appreciated" by her teachers. In second grade, she questioned why a peer was being held back and told her mom, "*Es porque ella no habla inglés pero ella sabe más que los demás* (It's because she doesn't speak English, but she knows more than everyone else)." She recognized that Spanish was viewed as a deficit and negatively impacted teachers' perceptions of her and her Spanish speaking peers. Maria de la Luz wished to have been a student in her own classroom or in her friends' classrooms to receive the "empathy," "respect," and "understanding" that she did not receive from her own teachers.

Paula's schooling experiences were not inherently negative, however, she felt that something was missing. She stated that she was "fortunate to have "good teachers" but she

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lacked a "connection" with them because she "never felt that any of the teachers reflected who [she] was as a person." Consequently, Paula wanted to become an urban teacher to "give back to [her] own community" and ensure that students were "able to see someone like them." For Paula being able to connect with her students culturally and linguistically was a driving force in her sense of responsibility to urban students. A standout experience with her third-grade teacher, who made an effort to develop a connection with Paula and her parents, was evidence to her of what schooling should be.

All six Latina veteran urban teachers frequently referenced their own schooling experiences when discussing their commitment to urban students. Further, they expressed how important and valuable having a shared identity with students was to sustain this commitment. For them, teaching urban students meant serving their own community and giving back to children who resembled them. Their sense of responsibility for Latina/o children ignited their *chispa*.

Asset to Urban Communities

These Latina veteran urban teachers recognized their shared identity as an asset to serving urban communities. They felt that their cultural and linguistic background was an advantage and was appreciated by both students and their families.

Carmen explained that families shared personal experiences with her, and she could understand them because "[she knew] the culture enough" and that gave parents the "sense that they can confide in [her]." Clarissa also mentioned that speaking Spanish meant that "[she's] able to communicate with [parents] in their language and it just makes it more comfortable for them to approach [her]." Paula felt that parents had "*mucha confianza* (lots of trust)" in sharing

private information with her and she appreciated that parents felt "comfortable enough" to do so. Several teachers discussed how this trust with families would sometimes lead to parents discussing topics that were not school related, such as marital challenges and legal issues. This was a testament to the strong relationships that these Latina teachers were able to form with families through their shared identity. Parents felt comfortable building these relationships with Latina teachers because they had a cultural connection and could communicate with them directly in their native language.

Because of this shared identity, the participants thought that their impact was an asset and more meaningful while working in urban schools. Clarissa explained this stating:

If I were to teach [in a non-urban setting] I wouldn't be such an asset as I am where I teach because I speak the language. I've built those relationships with families. And I feel like I try to make those connections with the kids and the parents to where I feel like I make them feel comfortable.

Penelope shared a similar sentiment explaining that her personal background equipped her to serve in urban communities stating:

Growing up in in a community where you don't see a lot of people going to college. Pushing these kids to break those cycles. For me it's huge and important and that's what motivates me to stay in urban schools because I know that if I were to move to a different school or a different community. . . . If the kids obviously had parents who are college educated and they have more opportunities, I don't think the impact would be as similar.

Bella also stated, "I feel like I can contribute more in this particular setting than if I were to go to a different setting." Latina veteran urban teachers felt that their impact as a teacher was

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more meaningful while serving in urban communities as opposed to other communities. They recognized that their cultural and linguistic background was an asset for serving in urban schools. This also sustained them as Latina veteran urban teachers and ignited their *chispa.*

Passion, Purpose, and Mission

Throughout our interviews, most participants described their profession as an urban teacher as their passion, purpose, or mission and identified this as a factor to sustaining them throughout their tenure, especially during challenging times. Clarissa described the moment she clearly identified her profession as her purpose when she attended Oprah's Your Life in Focus Tour. During a workshop focused on work she stated that she realized, "Oh my gosh! That is my life's purpose! So, before this, I already knew that, but this training or this retreat just put it into words for me." She explained that in the workshop she was able to define her profession as "performing work that aligns with your values and goals and deriving satisfaction and enrichment by contributing your gifts to something meaningful." As urban teachers, all the participants were contributing their cultural and linguistic gifts to impact the lives of their students, which proved to be meaningful and motivational for each of them.

Bella highlighted her "pride" in knowing she was "making a difference in particular in the Latino community." She stated:

I'm passionate about teaching, but I'm passionate more so to give [urban students] an opportunity. . . . I'm deeply committed to the idea that they can experience the best and that's what drives me to be honest.

Carmen explained that even when "it's been challenging," she's never wanted to leave the profession because of her "passion." Paula also shared the same sentiment stating:

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You do need that passion and I think that passion is also the one that helps you through these struggles. It's like always trying to come back thinking of why is it that you're doing what you're doing. What is your purpose? Because sometimes it is very easy to give up.

Paula recalled various times in her career when professional responsibilities became difficult and how her passion for teaching helped sustain her and overcome these challenges.

Penelope described urban teaching as the way that she fulfilled her mission and purpose by stating, "It's my mission as an individual to create change in the lives of my students. . . . I think everyone has a purpose." She added how "important it is to close the education gap" and how that's the reason she "remained in the urban setting."

These participants viewed their role as urban teachers as a purpose or mission. Their passion for the profession stemmed from feeling that their work was meaningful in making a difference in the lives of their urban students.

Latina veteran urban teachers had a strong commitment to urban students which helped sustain them through their many years of experience. This commitment to urban students was exhibited in several ways. Participants felt a sense of responsibility to urban students based on their shared cultural and linguistic identity and their own schooling experiences. Further, participants felt that this shared identity was an asset to urban communities allowing them to create a greater impact on urban students and their families. Participants described their commitment to urban students using language that demonstrated their sense of responsibility, such as passion, purpose, and mission.

Alimentando la Chispa: Dedication to Professional Growth

Latina Veteran urban teachers expressed how maintaining a dedication to professional growth throughout their careers sustained them. Several of them stated that they were consistently learning and developing their practice. Maria de la Luz summarized her 15 years in the profession with the word "growing" emphasizing that "it's the opposite of being stagnant," which was important to her. This desire to continue growing was consistent amongst all participants as they explained that they wanted to be the best version of themselves for their students. They wanted to persistently fuel their *chispa* to continuously develop themselves and avoid burnout.

Participation in Professional Development

One way that these teachers demonstrated their dedication to professional growth was through continuous participation in professional development opportunities. Their survey responses reflected this as they all listed numerous professional development trainings from throughout their years in the field. Bella explained that "professional learning opportunities [kept her] fire going" and Paula described "feeding off the energy of everyone" when attending conferences. Maria de la Luz rationalized that she enjoyed attending trainings and being observed because "there's always room for improvement and there's always room to learn something new."

Professional development reassured Latina veteran urban teachers about their practice as they aimed to do their best for their students. Clarissa explained this in the context of distance learning stating:

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Even though I feel like I'm doing an okay job right now with distance learning, I know there's so much I can do so much better. I'm not happy with the teacher that I am right now because I feel like there's something missing. And I may never find that missing piece just because it's the whole distance learning situation that we're in. But I'm going to make sure that it doesn't fall on me and my lack of pursuing more and learning more through professional development to make sure that I am the best teacher for my kids.

By attending professional development, Clarissa felt that she was being proactive in improving the deficit that she perceived. Paula also shared a similar feeling describing how she needed help with some new digital tools and, consequently, sought out her curriculum coach to support. She explained that it was "really nice" to know that there is "help" and "support" when she needs it. Participation in professional development opportunities was one way that participants demonstrated that they were dedicated to fueling their *chispa* through professional growth.

Participation in Leadership Opportunities

Through their participation in leadership opportunities, Latina veteran urban teachers also demonstrated their dedication to professional growth. All participants were grade level chairs for multiple years in their careers. They served on various school site committees, including School Safety Committee, School Site Council, Parent Teacher Association, Student Support Team, and others. At the district level they also were a part of various working groups, such as curriculum adoption committees, the Dual Language Immersion Steering Committee, the English Learners Council, and the Local Control and Accountability Plan Committee. All teachers had mentorship

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experience as well, either as master teachers for student teachers or support providers for novice teachers completing induction.

Taking on these leadership roles boosted teachers' confidence. As colleagues and administrators recommended them to serve on committees or to take on mentorship roles, they felt "validation" because someone took notice of their work and saw their "potential." Clarissa stated, "If I'm being asked to be part of a committee it's because they value my worth. And so I'm going to take that as a compliment." Penelope also explained the surprise and confidence she felt when her administrator asked her to serve as a support provider. She stated, "That made me reflect. Wow! Like she sees some qualities in me that sometimes I may not see in myself, you know. But that also motivated me to continue doing what I do."

The confidence they found in participating in leadership opportunities helped participants "step out of [their] comfort zone" to take on responsibilities beyond the classroom. Bella explained the benefits of serving as a lead teacher, stating:

You go to these trainings. You get trained and then you come back, and you have to relay this information to your colleagues. So being able to put myself out there and constantly learning I think makes you a more well-rounded educator because not only are you leading a meeting or training or mentoring, but you're also a classroom teacher. And you're able to bring all of those experiences back into the classroom.

These leadership roles gave veteran teachers opportunities to "thrive" as they gained new knowledge and skills to become better classroom teachers, mentors, and leaders. This also enabled them to impact students schoolwide through a "ripple effect." Bella explained that it would be "unfair" if "only some children got that quality education and the others did not," so

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she attempted to influence peers through the leadership roles that she took on. These leadership roles also fueled the *chispa* and kept teachers in a consistent spirit of growth.

Collaboration

Latina veteran urban teachers also continued growing as professionals through their collaboration with colleagues. All teachers identified benefitting from the process of collaborating with their grade level teams. Maria de la Luz and Paula also stated that they collaborated with teachers from other sites. Paula explained that through collaboration, her and her peers were "able to grow together." She was able to find new ways to change her instruction by sharing ideas, "being open to suggestions," and "feeding off of each other." Other participants also shared that collaboration gave them an opportunity to think differently and compare strategies. Maria de la Luz stated that it could be easier for some teachers to work on their own, but collaboration with peers helps you "think out of the box." For the participants collaborating with colleagues ensured that they were continuously updating their instruction each year. Collaboration also provided fuel for the *chispa* as they were inspired to continue learning from peers.

Resisting Plateauing

Another way that Latina veteran urban teachers exhibited their dedication to professional growth was by resisting plateauing. Many of them rejected the desire to replicate instruction year after year and intentionally made changes to keep things new. Clarissa explained that she viewed each year as a "fresh start" and threw away posters and lesson plans so that it kept her "excited" to do the work and did not "become a routine." She stated, "I try to do things so that I don't get stuck in a rut and I think that is honestly probably why I haven't had teacher burnout." Bella also

expressed that "being willing to change [her] approach and not being stuck or stagnant has allowed [her] to prevent burnout." Maria de la Luz enjoyed that "every day is a different day" because "keeping it fresh is really important for [her]."

The participants felt that they needed to be proactive in resisting plateauing by forcing themselves to embrace change. Clarissa explained that she intentionally did things "out of [her] comfort zone" because it gave her the opportunity to "make [instruction] even better" for her students. Maria de la Luz thought to the future stating:

> That a moment when I feel like this is not for me, I think I have to be really cognizant of what I'm going to do. Is it time to change a grade level? What do I need to do?

She acknowledged that plateauing could lead her to enjoying the profession less and change could be a remedy. Latina veteran urban teachers proactively resisted plateauing, understanding that stagnancy could lead to losing their *chispa* and reaching burnout.

The dedication to professional growth of all participants helped sustain them as Latina veteran urban teachers. They displayed this commitment by participating in professional development opportunities that were relevant to their work. By collaborating with colleagues regularly, participants also grew professionally. Further, participants resisted plateauing by proactively making changes to their practice.

Preservando la Chispa: **Strong Personal and Professional Networks**

All Latina veteran urban teachers credited their personal and professional networks for helping to sustain them throughout their long tenure in numerous ways. These networks contributed to preserving their *chispa* by offering multiple layers of support and protection.

Personal Networks

The six participants emphasized the critical role that their personal network played in their journey towards becoming urban teachers and in helping to sustain them once they entered the profession. All teachers highlighted the value of family in the Latina/o culture. A value that was engrained in them since childhood. They stated that they were "lucky," "blessed," or "spoiled" to have so much support from family and friends in their journey as urban teachers. These personal networks consisted of parents, significant others, siblings, friends, and extended family who all played a direct and indirect role in sustaining these urban teachers into their veterancy.

Personal Networks Understand Commitment to Urban Students

Participants described how their personal networks understood their commitment to urban students and helped sustain this commitment. Maria de la Luz recalled how "proud" her mom was in seeing her do something that she loves professionally. Her mom validated her strong work ethic assuring her that although it was a lot of work, it was worth it because she saw her "joy." Bella remembered her parents telling her, "If you're going to do something, do it right and do it to the best of your ability," which assured her in her commitment to the profession. Bella also mentioned how her best friend was someone she trusted with her "frustrations" because she always gave her "sound advice" that helped her stay focused on her passion for urban teaching. Several participants explained how discussing their schooling experiences with siblings and cousins who shared similar experiences contributed to reinforcing their commitment to urban students.

Several participants had family members who were also urban school educators. Paula's husband was a high school teacher and Penelope's husband was a school psychologist. They both felt understood by their spouses because they shared similar professional experiences with them. Penelope explained that her and her husband were "likeminded" and had a shared goal of "building up [their] communities and the students that [they] work with." Carmen, Maria de la Luz, and Penelope had in laws, cousins, grandparents, and other family members who were in education. Many of them also served in predominantly Latina/o schools. These teachers discussed sharing stories with these family members who were educators and using them as a "sounding board" to work through challenges.

Personal Networks Provide Emotional Support

During challenging times, participants relied on their personal networks for emotional support. Paula stated that "just talking" to her family and friends about challenges helped. Penelope discussed "sharing stories" of challenges in urban education with family and appreciating that they understood. Maria de la Luz relied on her mom to "talk about things regarding work." Her mom would respond by saying, "*Te quiero mucho. No te preocupes. Así es en todos los trabajos*. (I love you. Don't worry. It's like that in all jobs.)" Participants depended on their personal networks for emotional support throughout their time as urban teachers. This emotional support helped them through numerous professional challenges.

Personal Networks Help with Personal Responsibilities

Many participants, especially those who were parents, highlighted how their personal networks helped "share the load" of personal responsibilities, including childcare and housework. Penelope and her husband would alternate picking up her daughter after work and

making dinner at night. Paula felt "lucky" that her mom and mother-in-law were part of her "support team." They helped with her children by picking them up from school, attending school events, and supporting them through distance learning, otherwise she would not be able to spend the same amount of time preparing lessons or getting ready for the following day. These teachers acknowledged how helpful it was for family members to share some of their personal responsibilities.

Personal Networks Provide Work Life Balance

All Latina veteran urban teachers described how their personal networks helped them maintain a work life balance. Bella shared that her family encouraged her "to strive for balance in life" by participating in social activities that made her happy. She stated, "What makes you happy, ultimately will make you a happier person in the classroom." Penelope explained that spending time with family doing "something apart from [her] daily routine and workload" helped her destress and maintain balance. Clarissa was "always big on [her] family eating dinner together." After dinner she would spend time with her husband and children going for a walk, taking a bike ride, or watching a movie. She explained that she maintained balance by "giving 100% at work" but then "putting that behind [her]" once she left to focus on her family and hobbies. Participants found that their personal network provided them with a healthy work life balance by offering distractions from their professional work through family gatherings, shared meals, vacations, and everyday social activities.

Professional Networks

All participants also gave credit to their professional networks of teachers and administrators for helping sustain them throughout their careers. These professional networks consisted of "likeminded" educators.

Professional Networks Share Commitment to Urban Students

These Latina veteran urban teachers surrounded themselves with peers who shared their commitment to serving urban students. Bella explained that she "always wanted to surround [herself] with other educators who are like [her]" and who shared "common values, beliefs, and outlook on life" because she could trust their feedback. Penelope stated:

> I feel that a lot of the close friends that I've made in the profession have also come from similar backgrounds as me and we've had similar experiences seeing inequalities in education that unfortunately happen in urban communities for many different factors. So having these open conversations with these teachers I think reinforces the purpose of why we do what we do.

Penelope recognized that she shared a stronger bond with colleagues who had a shared identity with her because they had similar background experiences. Similarly, Paula stated, "*Las Latinas somos muy unidas*. (Latinas are very united.) We just support each other. And I feel like that's the thing that keeps us in or has kept me in." Paula recognized the cultural connection that Latina teachers often shared, which nurtured a stronger bond between them. Additionally, this cultural connection sustained them in their commitment to urban students.

Several teachers discussed the respect and esteem that they had for their teacher friends. Clarissa expressed her admiration for each individual in her professional network and how they

"value each other's work ethic and goals and aspirations in [their] profession." She explained that she had so much appreciation for them as professionals that being friends with them was validation of her own teaching practice.

Some participants felt that their friends' work ethic and dedication made them "the best teachers." Maria de la Luz emphasized how "amazing" it would have been to be a student in her friends' classrooms and how much more "empowered" and confident she would have felt in comparison to her personal schooling experiences as a child. Paula's children attended her school site's dual language immersion program. She explained:

> My coworkers are like my family. I know the amount of work that they put into what
> they're doing. And I know the passion that they have for teaching . . . and I know that I
> really trust the teachers.

Paula appreciated her colleagues so much as professionals that she entrusted them with her own children's education. As fellow Latina urban educators, she felt that they shared the same values for culture and language as her.

Professional Networks Provide Emotional Support

Like their personal networks, professional networks also provided participants with emotional support for both professional and personal hurdles. Penelope recalled the reassurance that her team provided her as she overcame "personal challenges with [her] health." Paula shared that she would talk to her peers when she was stressed because "they understood where [she] was coming from." They would also leave positive notes in her boxes when she was having a rough day. Maria de la Luz recalled how her friends would check in on her regularly when she was having difficulty with a student with strong external behaviors. Participants appreciated the

emotional support that their professional networks provided in order to sustain their continued work.

Professional Networks Help with Professional Responsibilities

All Latina veteran urban teachers participated in recurring collaboration with colleagues to share professional responsibilities. They would work together to plan, create lessons, compare results, and problem solve. Carmen enjoyed the "camaraderie with [her] team" and the fact that they "can all count on each other to help" to make the workload feel less overwhelming. Maria de la Luz met weekly with a group of teachers from across the district to "break apart all of [their] work" by having each teacher work on different lessons. By sharing work responsibilities, participants felt a "sense of comfort" know they were not tackling the work on their own.

Professional Networks Support Work Life Balance

Most participants explained that they developed such strong bonds with some of their educator friends that they also became a part of their personal network. As a result, they spent time with colleagues outside of work hours, which helped support a healthy work life balance. Paula and Maria de la Luz explained that they would go to happy hour or breakfast with peers. Carmen, Clarissa, and Bella stated that they shared life milestones with their professional network, attending weddings, baby showers, and birthday parties.

At work, professional networks also supported with maintaining this balance by adding a social component to the workday. Many teachers expressed enjoying spending lunchtime with their colleagues to catch up on their personal lives. On long workdays, Maria de la Luz would schedule coffee breaks or a shared meal with a peer. Regular interactions at work were also an opportunity to "keep it light-hearted."

Professional networks helped sustain Latina veteran urban teachers in various ways. Participants intentionally created their professional network to consist of peers who shared a commitment to urban students. Trusted colleagues provided emotional support for participants during professional and personal challenges. Additionally, professional networks helped lessen participants' workload by sharing professional responsibilities amongst each other. As they developed stronger bonds with colleagues, participants' peers became a part of their personal network as well. This created opportunities to socialize inside and outside of work to support a healthy work life balance.

Conclusion

This chapter synthesized findings for this study. This cross-case analysis provided a collective explanation of the factors that sustained six Latina veteran urban teachers in their profession in order to answer the research question for this study. The following chapter provides a discussion analyzing the major themes that were identified through participants' *testimonios* and the cross-case analysis. This analysis aims to create a professional and learning environment that is more effective in developing and sustaining Latina urban teachers long term. Consequently, implications and recommendations are drawn by highlighting these six participants' histories as Latina veteran urban teachers.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

Research demonstrates that Latina/o teachers create a more positive and equitable education experience for Latina/o students through their instructional practices and advocacy (Dee, 2004; Flores, 2017; García-Nevarez et al., 2005). As a result, Latina/o teachers improve outcomes for Latina/o students, as demonstrated by attendance rates, test scores, graduation rates, and more (Clewell et al., 2001; Meire, 1993). Due to systemic challenges in our education system, however, Latina/o teachers face many hurdles in their educational and professional journey which have led to a representation gap between our student population and the teacher workforce (NCES, 2020; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Additionally, the Latina/o teachers that successfully graduate from a teacher preparation program and acquire a teaching job experience a higher attrition rate than most teacher demographics, aside from Black teachers (Albert Shanker Institute, 2015). Understanding that our Latina/o student population benefits from learning from teachers that mirror their ethnic and linguistic background, it is critical that our education system sustains Latina/o teachers in the profession long term. The purpose of this study was to identify the personal and professional factors that sustained Latina veteran urban teachers in a predominantly Latina/o school district through the use of *testimonios*. Urban schools are characterized by their student population, which is comprised of a majority of minority students and a majority of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Eckert, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006; NCES, 2020; Noguera, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 1996). For the purpose of this study, urban students are mostly Latina/o students due to the majority Latina/o student population in River City Elementary School District. This chapter

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includes a summary of this study, a discussion on the findings, implications for various levels of our education system, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Study

This qualitative research study explored the phenomena of Latina veteran urban teachers by developing *testimonios* that constructed meaning based on the common experiences of the participants. The research question for this study was:

What are the personal and professional factors that sustain Latina veteran urban teachers?

Two frameworks were combined to create the theoretical framework that guided this study, teachers as intellectuals and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Giroux, 1988; Paris & Alim, 2017). Teachers who are intellectuals reflect and think critically about their practice in efforts to meet the needs of their students (Giroux, 1988). Culturally sustaining pedagogy, or CSP, is a theory and practice of teaching that aims to maintain cultural pluralism through an additive approach that builds on students cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Paris & Alim, 2017). The two frameworks were selected because they are complementary. Urban teachers that are intellectuals design instruction implementing many elements of CSP in order to effectively serve their urban student population. The combination of these frameworks provided a critical lens for this study. In addition to these two frameworks, this study was further informed by existing literature on effective teachers and veteran teachers' career cycles. Collectively, these four literature topics provided the theoretical framework for the study, guided the development of the methodology, and offered an informed lens for data analysis.

Six Latina veteran urban teachers participated in this study. The participants were selected based on the fulfillment of the following criteria:

- **veteran teacher:** The teacher has at least ten years of teaching experience in an urban school (Rockoff, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

- **urban teacher:** The teacher currently serves in a school with a student population that is comprised of a majority of minority students and a majority of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, as identified by free and reduced lunch qualification (Eckert, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2006; NCES, 2020; Noguera, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 1996).

- **culturally sustaining pedagogue:** The teacher employs culturally sustaining pedagogy as an instructional framework in order to meet the unique needs of urban students (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Multiple methods of data collection were implemented to triangulate the data. Participants completed a screening survey in which data focused on demographics, professional history, and instructional practice were collected. Each participant submitted at least two documents as evidence of their practice as culturally sustaining pedagogues. Finally, a semi-structured three-interview series was conducted with each participant. Sacred spaces were established during the interview process in order to facilitate participants' critical conversations by providing a safe physical and theoretical space for them to share their experiences (Diaz Soto et al., 2019). Each interview had a different focus, including the participant's life history, contemporary experience as a Latina veteran urban teacher, and reflection on their experience (Seidman, 2006).

Data analysis included two phases. First, individual *testimonios,* or critical narratives, were developed for each participant (Delgado, 1989; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). These

testimonios were developed through inductive coding, the creation of topical themes, and member checking. Each *testimonio* provided a firsthand account of participants' experiences as Latina veteran urban teachers. Then, a cross-case analysis was conducted. Codes were refined and organized into categories. As themes developed, the findings provided a collective account of the experiences of all six participants.

Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to identify the personal and professional factors that sustained Latina veteran urban teachers. Through multiple sources of data collection and a two phased data analysis process, three major findings were concluded:

- **Commitment to urban students**: Latina veteran urban teachers feel a sense of responsibility to making a difference in the lives of urban students, view themselves as an asset to urban communities based on their shared identity with urban students, and consider urban teaching to be their passion.

- **Dedication to professional growth**: Latina veteran urban teachers demonstrate commitment to continuous improvement in their professional practice through regular participation in professional development opportunities, participation in leadership opportunities, collaboration with peers, and active resistance to plateauing.

- **Strong personal and professional networks**: Latina veteran urban teachers develop groups of individuals from their personal and professional lives who provide them with support in various manners in both their personal and professional contexts.

Discussion of Findings

Latina veteran urban teachers are sustained by multiple personal and professional factors in their long-term careers. The findings in this study identified three main factors that sustained Latina veteran urban teachers' *chispa*. These included their commitment to urban students, dedication to professional growth, and strong personal and professional networks. This section will discuss these findings in relation to the current research that was presented in Chapter 2.

***Encendiendo la Chispa:* Commitment to Urban Students**

The first finding in this study identified Latina veteran urban teachers' strong commitment to serving urban students as a factor that contributed to sustaining them professionally and igniting their *chispa*. This commitment to urban students was demonstrated through their sense of responsibility to urban communities, their view of themselves as assets to urban communities, and their description of urban teaching being their passion, purpose, and mission.

Research demonstrates that it is critical for urban teachers to have a strong ideology and commitment to diverse students (Haberman, 1994). This is the main distinction between effective teachers who serve in urban schools and effective teachers in general settings (Haberman, 1994). Speaking on her commitment and that of her peers, Paula expressed that "teachers that work in urban communities care about their students [and] have our hearts in helping them." The teachers in this study described their commitment to serving in urban settings as their passion, purpose, or mission as professionals.

Flores (2017) described Latina teachers as cultural guardians, or individuals who intentionally use a variety of methods to support and protect children who share their cultural

background. Latina veteran urban teachers' commitment to urban students stimulated this cultural guardianship. Latina veteran urban teachers understood that they were an "asset" to Latina/o students and their families. They acknowledged that they were uniquely equipped to meet the needs of their students because of their experiential knowledge, which in turn motivated and sustained them to continue serving in a predominantly Latina/o school district.

Participants also demonstrated this commitment through their sense of responsibility to mitigating inequities for urban youth. They discussed and exemplified their practice as culturally sustaining pedagogues who contend with the internalized oppressions that their students face (Paris & Alim, 2017). Bella stated, "I have that passion to prove that children that live and are from diverse backgrounds, like myself, can achieve anything that they set their mind to. That we're not limited by our background." Penelope also expressed how it was important to "acknowledge [inequities in urban communities] and try to do your best to help the problem and to close those gaps" as a Latina teacher. She added that "others who may not have those lenses" may not view this as a priority or be able to support their students through those inequities in the same manner. All teachers in this study provided instruction that challenged social oppressions, as exemplified by the instructional documents that they provided. Paula, for example, presented and described a lesson that she implements annually with her kindergartners focused on "how their name is the reflection of their heritage." She described her personal struggle with accepting her name as a child and the embarrassment she felt when people would mispronounce it until she "realized the value and the significance to [her] name and how that ties into [her] heritage." Through this lesson she promoted cultural and linguistic pride in her Latina/o students. Latina veteran urban teachers' commitment to urban students stemmed from their own personal

backgrounds, which overlapped the cultural and linguistic experiences of their students. They were able to use their own personal struggles as a foundation to connect with their students. Their personal struggles and background also gave them a sense of responsibility to serve urban students and to provide improved experiences for them.

Participants identified how their shared cultural and linguistic background supported their professional longevity. Clarissa expressed that urban teachers need to be "educated on the culture" of their students and their families. She recognized her personal advantage stating:

> For me, it's easier to teach in an urban area because of where I come from. Whereas if somebody doesn't come from that and doesn't have the experience in how the students in our demographic and their ethnicities work, then I think they're going to make it difficult.

Latina veteran urban teachers highlighted how not having a strong cultural understanding could present challenges for urban teachers. Teacher prep programs do not adequately prepare teachers to serve in urban settings, so teachers often lack the knowledge and skills to be successful in urban schools (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Celik & Amak, 2012; Darling-Hammond, 2003). This, along with other systemic challenges, place urban teachers at a higher risk of stress and burnout, which leads to increased teacher turnover in urban schools (Barnes et al., 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1998; NCES, 2020; Noguera, 2003). Latina teachers, however, are uniquely equipped to serve in urban communities, despite the lack of formal preparation in teacher prep programs, due to their firsthand experiences. Consequently, Latina veteran urban teachers may not experience the same levels of stress and burnout caused by the lack of preparation from teacher preparation programs. Their experiential knowledge supports them in filling some of the gaps from teacher preparation programs.

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As culturally sustaining pedagogues, Latina veteran urban teachers also demonstrated their commitment to urban students by using their experiential knowledge to critically center their practice on community languages, practices, and knowledges (Paris & Alim, 2017). They were able to support students and their parents in their educational journey using their shared culture and language. Penelope explained how she could "relate to a lot of the issues or things that come up in the community" and could use this knowledge to support students and their parents. Teachers who share similar cultural backgrounds as their students demonstrate improved student outcomes due to this understanding of culture (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Noguera, 2009). Carmen also expressed how having "a strong grasp of the culture" and being a native Spanish speaker was an "advantage" that helped her connect with students and parents. Research shows that emergent bilingual students particularly benefit from having bilingual teachers because these teachers use students' heritage languages as a building block for learning (Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 2010). Additionally, these teachers are better able to support students' families and build strong relationships with them as a result of these cultural and linguistic connections (Darder, 1993; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 1994; Rueda et al., 2004).

Latina veteran urban teachers' experiential knowledge gives them an advantage in developing strong connections with students and families, resulting in improved outcomes for Latina/o students (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Noguera, 2009). Consequently, experiencing this success feeds Latina teachers' self-efficacy as they are validated in their professional practice. Bella identified this self-efficacy as she stated, "When [my students] get reclassified, I see that as a victory. When they're reading level goes up maybe one grade level, two, three. That's a victory." Latina veteran urban teachers found their work to be "rewarding" and built their self-

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efficacy as they witnessed the positive impact that they had on their urban students. Self-efficacy is a characteristic that is demonstrated to sustain veteran teachers and support them in mitigating the demands of teaching (Herman et al., 2018; Lynn, 2002; Meister & Ahrens, 2011).

Latina veteran urban teachers' cultural and linguistic identity fired their commitment to urban students and was the igniting power behind their *chispa*. This benefitted the students and families that they served and, in return, validated their work. Consequently, this contributed to sustaining their long-term commitment to serving in urban schools.

Alimentando la Chispa: Dedication to Professional Growth

The second finding in this study identified Latina veteran urban teachers' dedication to professional growth as another factor that sustained them professionally and ensured continuous fuel for their *chispa*. Teachers in this study participated in professional development regularly, participated in leadership opportunities at the school site and district level, collaborated with peers, and resisted plateauing proactively. Maria de la Luz stated, "*Yo no sé todo pero puedo aprender* [I don't know everything, but I can learn]." They recognized that continued learning was an integral part of their professionalism. Consequently, this continuous learning fed their *chispa* and maintained it throughout their career.

Giroux's (1988, 2010) ideology of viewing teachers as intellectuals recognizes teachers' ability to think critically and practice reflective decision making as experts in their field. These Latina veteran urban teachers were intellectual practitioners. They highlighted how reflection was an integral component of their practice that led to continuous professional growth. Bella explained that she participated in "constant reflection" probing herself with questions like "How am I going to respond if these kids are struggling or if they need to move on to the next phase?"

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or "What did I do well during the day and what can I improve for the following day?" Her questions demonstrated her personal disposition as a reflective practitioner, which is a characteristic of effective teachers (Stronge, 2007). Carmen also exemplified the ideology of Latina veteran urban teachers as intellectuals as she stated:

There are so many decisions. You are given curriculum, but it's really up to you to what your expertise is and what you need to do to help the kids. I think having that sense of commitment that you're going to diversify lessons according to what [students] need and not what you're given is key.

Latina veteran urban teachers were not technicians who simply followed prescribed curriculum (Giroux, 1988). Instead, they reflected on students' needs and made intentional decisions to differentiate their instruction to meet those needs. Steffy et al. (2000) identified reflective cycles as a critical factor that supports teachers in continuing through the progressive phases of the career cycle until they reach the expert, distinguished, or emeritus phases of their careers. Participants in this study demonstrated their intellectualism through their reflective practice, which helped them grow as professionals and sustained them.

Teachers in this study also participated in other forms of professional development as a result of their intellectualism. Participants discussed how professional development, including trainings, conventions, and collaboration with peers, kept them "energized" or kept their "fire going." According to Lynn (2002), teachers who enjoy their careers and continue seeking professional development sustain themselves in the enthusiastic and growing stage of the dynamic and flexible career cycle model, thus avoiding stagnancy, frustration, and burnout.

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Research has demonstrated that a contributing factor to veteran teachers' deteriorating commitment and professional plateauing is political nostalgia, which is caused by their sensed loss of autonomy due to external top-down mandated policies and initiatives (Day & Gu, 2009; Snyder, 2017). Teachers who are intellectuals inevitably feel discouraged when their expertise is undervalued. Many veteran teachers, however, express a desire to offer their expertise by participating in authentic dialogue focused on new policies and initiatives (Snyder, 2017). Participants in this study held multiple leadership roles at the site and district level where they were able to participate in such authentic dialogue. This included serving on district curriculum adoption committees, the district Dual Language Immersion Steering Committee, the Student Success Team, the School Safety Committee, the Parent Outreach Committee, and grade level leadership. They also ran for positions on their School Site Council and Parent Teacher Association. These leadership roles empowered them to have a stronger voice in influencing school site and district decisions. Teachers of color are known to positively impact schools' overall progress towards serving urban youth by advocating for equitable practices, challenging stereotypes, and influencing school action plans (Irvine, 2003; Ross et al., 2015; Sleeter et al., 2015). Latina veteran urban teachers helped their schools and district work towards this progress through the leadership roles they held. Consequently, these roles also helped them in their professional growth as they acquired new skills and knowledge through their participation and collaborative work.

Prevalent research on veteran teachers focuses on teachers' resistance to change and risk of plateauing, or the stall of their professional growth (Day & Gu, 2009; Lynn, 2002; Snyder, 2017). This resistance to change and plateauing can cause deteriorating commitment for the

profession and increased frustration, stagnation, and ineffectiveness (Day & Gu, 2009; Lynn, 2002; Meister & Ahrens, 2011). The Latina veteran urban teachers in this study acknowledged the need for change due to the changing needs of their students. Penelope stated that "demographics of the students has slowly change, but also the needs have changed." Paula also recognized that "there's been so many changes in the kids' dynamics coming into the classroom from what [she] previously had" so she felt that she needed to change with them to be "better equipped." Latina veteran urban teachers embraced change, instead of resisting it. Their commitment to urban students motivated them to "adapt" and "make instruction better" because "there's always room for growth." Bella stated:

> At the end of the day, being stuck in my own ways could benefit me because it makes my life easier, but that's not the point here. The point is what's best for the children. And so, because of that, I'm willing to learn.

> They viewed change as the remedy for plateauing. They recognized that change may bring challenges, but their commitment to being the "best version" of themselves for their students made the challenge worthwhile. They changed grade levels, took on new leadership positions, worked with their curriculum coaches, and took on mentorship roles when they felt the need for professional change. Clarissa stated that she wanted to avoid "routine," so change felt "exciting" to her because each year she had the opportunity to "try something out for the first time." To counteract the possible negative impacts of consistent change due to long tenure, veteran teachers need to be resilient and embrace change like the Latina veteran urban teachers in this study (Lynn, 2002; Meister & Ahrens, 2011).

Latina veteran urban teachers also proactively resisted plateauing by making intentional decisions to keep things "exciting" and "fresh." Some of these decisions included throwing out lesson plans each year to avoid replicating instruction, collaborating with peers from other school sites to consider new perspectives, and forcing themselves out of their "comfort zone" to try new things. Clarissa stated, "I try to do things so that I don't get stuck in a rut and I think that is honestly probably why I haven't had teacher burnout." Bella also expressed, "Being willing to change my approach and not being stuck or stagnant has allowed me to prevent burnout." These Latina veteran urban teachers understood that plateauing could cause them to lose their enthusiasm for the profession, so they worked proactively to sustain themselves by resisting stagnancy. Teachers that have the skills and willingness to resist plateauing continue their professional growth throughout their tenure (Meister & Ahrens, 2011).

Latina veteran urban teachers demonstrated their intellectualism through their dedication to continuous professional growth. This professional growth empowered them to mitigate the challenges that come with the consistent changes attributed to a long career and to avoid plateauing (Meister & Ahrens, 2011). Consequently, their engagement in continuous professional growth helped sustain them in their careers as urban educators and maintained them at the enthusiastic and growing stage of the teacher career cycle (Lynn, 2002). This supported them in avoiding frustration and burn out while fueling their *chispa* to keep it thriving (Lynn, 2002).

Preservando la Chispa: **Strong Personal and Professional Networks**

The last finding of this study identified Latina veteran urban teachers' strong personal and professional networks as a factor that sustained them in their professional careers. Personal

networks consisted of significant others, children, parents, siblings, extended family, and close friends. Professional networks were composed of peers, including teachers and administrators, who these participants developed close bonds with throughout their careers. These personal and professional networks supported teachers in their commitment to urban students, provided teachers with emotional support, helped them share personal and professional responsibilities, and supported their work life balance. Through this support, these personal and professional networks acted as a foundation and protection that assisted teachers in preserving their *chispa*.

Research demonstrates that many veteran teachers demonstrate deteriorating commitment to the profession (Day & Gu, 2009). The participants in this study explained that their personal and professional networks supported them in remaining committed in their service to urban students. Latina veteran urban teachers were intentional in creating their professional network of "likeminded" peers who shared this commitment. Penelope stated that her professional network of teacher friends shared "similar backgrounds" and "similar experiences" with inequalities in urban education. Having "open conversations" with these friends "[reinforced] the purpose of why we do what we do." Maria de la Luz also stated that during the most difficult year of her career she had a conversation with a peer and stated, "I think I need to leave the teaching profession, but I don't know what I would do." This peer responded, "That's because you still love it," and helped Maria de la Luz realize that the challenges she was facing were temporary and all she could do was her best. Surrounding themselves with professionals who shared their identities, experiences, and passion for urban teaching helped Latina veteran urban teachers remain committed. Participants expressed that these professional networks served as a "safe" place to vent frustrations while remaining focused on their commitment. Teachers that develop

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strong professional networks are better able to counteract negativity and maintain enthusiasm and commitment (Lynn, 2002; Meister & Ahrens, 2011).

Personal and professional networks also provided emotional support to Latina veteran urban teachers. "Just talking" and "sharing stories" with their family helped teachers feel understood. Because of the strong relationships that they developed with peers; Latina veteran urban teachers' professional networks were also able to support them through personal challenges. Personal factors, including crisis, can impact a teachers' professional progress through the career cycle (Lynn, 2002). The emotional support and encouragement that these networks provided teachers helped mitigate the challenges during times of personal crisis (Lynn, 2002; Steffy et al., 2000).

Other personal factors that also impact teachers' advancement in the career cycle stages include life phases, family life, and life events, and societal expectations (Lynn, 2002). Participants credited their networks with sharing personal and professional responsibilities and recognized that this helped make the load less stressful. Latina veteran urban teachers had a supportive personal network of parents and partners who shared childcare and housework responsibilities. At work, their professional network shared tasks, such as preparing instructional tools, and collaborated to problem solve and lesson plan. By "sharing the load" of personal and professional responsibilities with their networks, teachers were better able to find stability in both their personal and professional lives, regardless of personal factors.

Maintaining healthy work life balance is another positive way for veteran teachers to resist plateauing and maintain their enthusiasm for teaching (Lynn, 2002; Meister & Ahrens, 2011). Latina veteran urban teachers' personal and professional networks also helped with

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supporting this work life balance. Personal networks encouraged teachers to create this balance through vacations, shared meals, family gatherings, social activities, and hobbies. Bella acknowledged that being a "happier person in the classroom" was influenced by doing "what makes you happy" in your personal life as well. Penelope identified family time as a good way to "destress" from her professional work. Professional networks also provided support for maintaining work life balance. Latina veteran urban teachers spent time outside of work hours with colleagues socializing and celebrating life milestones. Some scheduled weekly outings with peers. During work hours, teachers' professional networks added an enjoyable social element to their workday by spending lunch and recess with peers and scheduling social breaks on long workdays to keep things "lighthearted." Peers also encouraged healthy habits to maintain work life balance by serving as accountability partners when teachers were working towards improving unhealthy habits, such as leaving work late or spending too much free time on professional responsibilities.

Developing strong personal and professional networks effectively helps veteran teachers resist plateauing and supports their professional enthusiasm, thus helping them in preserving their *chispa* (Lynn, 2002; Meister & Ahrens, 2011). Latina veteran urban teachers' strong personal and professional networks provided multiple supports for their personal and professional lives. Consequently, this helped teachers maintain a balance so that they could sustain themselves in their professional work. This work life balance contributed to teachers' long-term enthusiasm (Lynn, 2002; Meister & Ahrens, 2011).

Significance of the Findings

This study revealed that Latina veteran urban teachers possess *a chispa,* or a spark, for

urban education and proactively work to fuel and preserve that *chispa* in efforts to keep it alive.

This *chispa* sustains these teachers in the profession long term. Figure 10 demonstrates how the

findings in this study are interrelated to sustain Latina veteran urban teachers.

Figure 10

Interrelation of the Findings
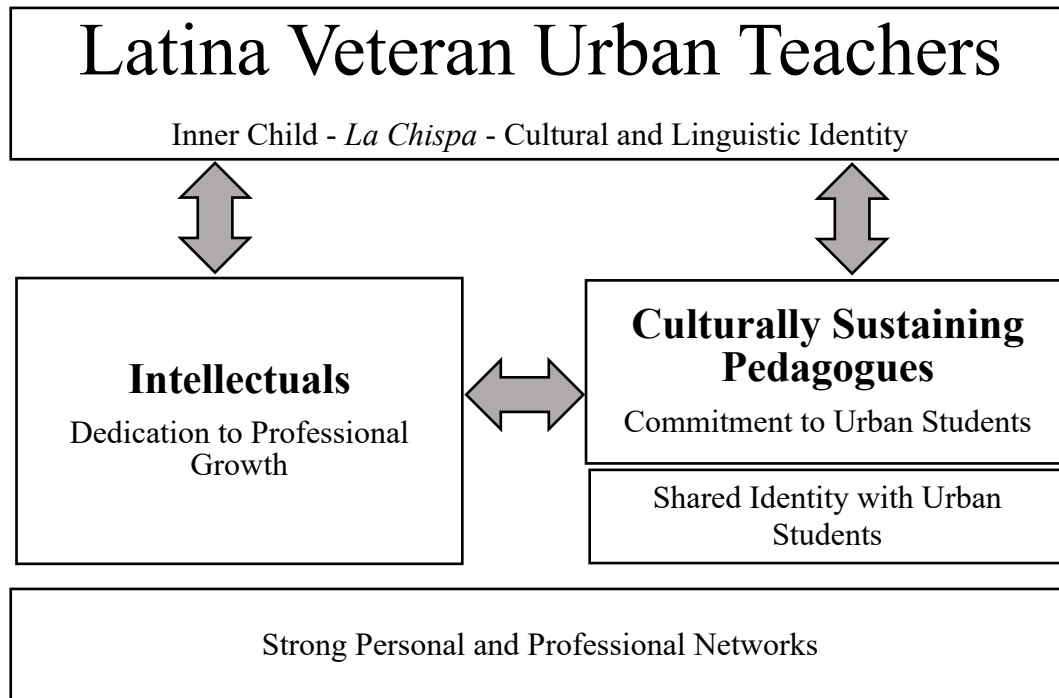
The *chispa* is ignited by Latina veteran urban teachers' commitment to serving urban

students. Their dedication to professional growth stems from this commitment as they put in

their best efforts to serve their urban students to their greatest ability, thus providing fuel for their

chispa. As urban teachers, the participants acted as intellectuals who reflected and improved their instructional practice through their dedication to professional growth, which sustained their resistance to plateauing. Consequently, this dedication to professional growth helped them provide culturally sustaining instruction to their diverse students. As culturally sustaining pedagogues this not only promoted improved schooling experiences for their urban students, but sustained teachers through their veterancy as it fueled their commitment to serving urban students who shared their ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Their *chispa* was further preserved and protected by teachers' strong personal and professional networks, which sustained Latina urban teachers by understanding and sharing in their commitment to urban students, providing them with emotional support, helping them with personal and professional responsibilities, and providing them with practices that provided work life balance.

Recommendations for Teacher Preparation Programs

This study demonstrated that Latina teachers have a strong commitment to serving in urban communities with students who share their cultural and linguistic identity. This commitment is a contributing factor to sustaining them in the profession long term, despite the systemic challenges that urban schools face. Consequently, teacher preparation programs and urban school districts would benefit from developing partnerships that increase the supply of well qualified Latina teachers. Through these partnerships, intentional service hour and student teaching assignments should be considered in order to give preservice Latina teachers early opportunities to reflect on their commitment to urban education. It is imperative that teacher preparation programs promote purposeful decision making when graduates begin seeking out teaching opportunities. Preservice and novice teachers should understand the long-term

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importance of having a strong commitment to serving within the communities that they seek employment.

This study has also identified how intellectualism and culturally sustaining practices benefit urban students and help sustain Latina veteran urban teachers. Therefore, teacher preparation programs must do a better job of developing teachers' intellectualism instead of producing technicians. As technicians, teachers will be poorly equipped to handle the diverse needs of urban students, which could lead to stress and burnout. On the contrary, developing teachers as intellectuals will support them in resisting plateauing, embracing change, and sustaining their commitment to the profession.

Additionally, urban teachers need to be provided with adequate preparation to employ culturally sustaining practices. Latina teachers who serve in predominantly Latina/o schools have the advantage of being able to use their experiential knowledge, as demonstrated in this study. Teachers who are not Latina/o do not have this benefit. Teacher preparation programs must deliberately prepare urban teachers with culturally sustaining practices that will support them throughout their careers in urban education.

Understanding that the representation gap in our schools is due to the myriad of challenges that teachers of color face throughout their education, it is critical that teacher preparation programs implement supportive measures to mitigate these challenges. Teacher preparation programs must recruit more Latina/o students and provide them with assistance so that they can successfully graduate and enter the teacher workforce.

Recommendations for Teacher Professional Development

One of the factors that sustained Latina veteran urban teachers in this study was their dedication to professional growth. To maintain teachers in urban schools in the long term, continuous and diverse professional development is vital. Professional development should focus on helping teachers acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to be successful with their specific student population. Participants in this study recommended professional development focused on increasing cultural proficiencies. They emphasized that understanding students' culture is necessary for success in urban teaching. Through neighborhood walks and home visits, teachers could develop a stronger understanding of students' culture. Anti-bias and cultural proficiency trainings would also support urban teachers by increasing their awareness of their personal biases and strengthening their critical practice.

Developing asset-based practices, such as culturally sustaining practices, would also support urban teachers' professional growth. Urban teachers benefit from adopting culturally sustaining practices because they are better able to engage students and families and, consequently, help produce more positive outcomes for urban students. Although Latina teachers may have experiential knowledge that helps them innately employ culturally sustaining practices, teachers who are not Latina/o may not.

Participants in this study highlighted the importance of allowing teachers to have autonomy over the professional development opportunities that they engage in. Some teachers expressed frustration with being forced to participate in training that they felt were redundant or not beneficial to their practice. School and site leaders must be mindful of respecting teachers'

intellectualism by providing them with diverse professional development opportunities that they can choose from.

Recommendations for District and School Leaders

This study has demonstrated the potential that Latina urban teachers have to positively impact urban education. Because of this, our education system must make progress towards closing the representation gap in the teacher work force. As previously stated, urban school districts would gain from developing partnerships with local universities to increase their supply of well-qualified Latina teachers. Similarly, districts should establish programs that support their own educational aides and paraprofessionals into becoming teachers. These staff members are often from the community and, therefore, have a shared identity with students and an established commitment to serving in urban contexts. Providing them with systemic supports would help mitigate some of the barriers that could prevent them from furthering their careers in education. Mentorship programs for aspiring Latina teachers starting in high school would also increase the pool of Latina teachers in the workforce. These mentorship programs would provide early interventions that could help Latinas overcome the hurdles they face on their path to becoming teachers.

District and site leaders must also develop a culture that that embraces change and promotes continuous growth in efforts to prevent plateauing. Teachers should be encouraged to take on leadership opportunities that support their growth by stepping outside of their role as classroom teachers. Structured collaboration and intentional development of teachers' professional network within and across school sites is also necessary.

School site leaders must place a greater focus on helping teachers develop a healthy work life balance. Participants in this study expressed the challenges they faced with maintaining balance early in their careers and how peers supported them as they learned to adopt healthier habits. Promoting healthy work life balance would help with maintaining teachers' enthusiasm throughout their careers and would prevent frustration and burnout.

Recommendations for Policy

The findings of this study support various policy initiatives at the federal, state, and local level. In order for the aforementioned recommendations to be effectively implemented by universities, school districts, and school sites, funding is necessary. Federal and state funding to support partnerships between universities and local urban school districts would help in effectively developing the next generation of urban schoolteachers. Teacher preparation programs also require funding to evaluate their current coursework requirements and make modifications to implement an increased focus on developing future teachers' intellectualism, cultural proficiency, and culturally sustaining practice. Active recruitment of Latina/o students into teacher preparation programs also requires financial backing.

At the district and site level, funding is needed to provide current teachers with professional development that supports them in developing their cultural proficiency and asset-based practices. The implementation of a teacher pipeline for educational aides and paraprofessionals would also require financial support and partnerships with local universities.

In order for these policy changes and their necessary funding to have further merit, the California Standards for the Teaching Profession, or CSTPs, should be revisited and revised. The incorporation of language that clearly identifies teachers' responsibility to view students'

linguistic and cultural backgrounds as an asset would support funding for the development of a teacher workforce that effectively implements asset-based approaches.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings in this study underline the need for further research around the topic of sustaining Latina/o teachers in urban schools. Studies focused on the limitations and delimitations of this study would make this body of research more comprehensive. The participants in this study were all female Latina teachers. The experiences of male Latino teachers need to be explored, as it may differ from the female perspective. This study was conducted in a district with a student population that was 85.4% Latina/o. Research must be conducted on Latina/o teachers who serve in districts with a different demographic breakdown, as this may impact the experiences of teachers as they work with students from more diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Additionally, this study was conducted in an elementary school district; therefore, the experiences of junior high, middle school, and high school teachers was not considered. A study with a more comprehensive span of grade levels is needed.

Participants in this study identified their dedication to continuous professional growth as a sustaining factor in their careers as it helped them resist plateauing. All teachers participated in numerous leadership opportunities and professional developments. Some teachers, however, expressed frustration with the redundant or unnecessary trainings proposed by their school district and stated that they wanted more autonomy. It would be beneficial for future research to identify characteristics of professional growth opportunities that support teachers in actively resisting plateauing. Also, research should explore the factors that may negatively impact veteran teachers' willingness to participate in professional growth.

Latina veteran urban teachers highlighted the importance of maintaining a healthy work life balance. Teachers mentioned vacations, hobbies, family time, and socializing with colleagues as a few of the practices that supported their work life balance. Future studies should delve deeper into exploring the specific practices that promote work life balance in teachers' professional and personal contexts.

Teachers in urban schools are at higher risk of experiencing stress and burnout. The Latina veteran urban teachers in this study, however, expressed that even when they faced professional challenges and stress, they never considered themselves to be at risk of burning out. One participant expressed that "there is a marked difference" in the way her and her Latina colleagues "culturally handle work" in comparison to her White colleagues. She attributed it to being raised by immigrant parents who worked hard and made sacrifices. First- and second-generation Latina teachers may have unique attributes that support them in overcoming professional challenges. Future research should further explore the relationship between immigration and teaching practice.

Conclusion

Latina veteran urban teachers have *la chispa*, the enthusiastic spark to serve urban students who resemble their cultural and linguistic background. They work intentionally to sustain their *chispa* in an effort to continue serving urban students to the best of their ability. Through three major factors, they are able to ignite, fuel, and preserve their *chispa* throughout their long tenures in urban education. These factors include their commitment to urban students, dedication to professional growth, and strong personal and professional networks. Comprehensively, these factors work together to create the conditions that successfully keep

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Latina veteran urban teachers' "fire going" and, as a result, they are able to provide quality

culturally sustaining instruction to urban students who often do not receive an adequate

education, resulting in an opportunity gap. Latina veteran urban teachers are valuable to our

educational system as their *chispa* positively impacts the experiences and outcomes of our urban

students.

Epilogue

In this study I was able to explore and identify the factors that sustain Latina veteran urban teachers through the development of *testimonios*. One of my main goals in developing these *testimonios* was to build solidarity amongst Latina educators by sharing their personal histories and shared experiences. As this study developed, this sense of solidarity grew stronger as I found myself drawing connections between my own *testimonio* and the *testimonios* of my participants.

Further, this study was initiated just as the COVID-19 pandemic reached global spread. Inevitably, the dynamics of the pandemic quarantine impacted the methodology implementation as well as teachers' participation in this study. With our education system uprooted and shifting to distance learning, educators were overwhelmed with the responsibility of transforming their teaching practice overnight. As a result, the participant recruitment process was delayed and multiple outreach attempts were necessary to recruit the initial four participants for this study. These participants then supported me in recruiting the final two participants. Further delays occurred throughout the three-interview series as participants felt the toll of increased personal and professional responsibilities in addition to social isolation. For me, the pandemic also presented multiple professional and personal challenges that impacted my time availability and health. Connecting with other Latina urban educators through interviews, however, provided social connections for my participants and I and reinspired us as we dealt with major changes in our profession.

As Latina urban educators, we were inspired to serve our community in order to provide our Latina/o students and their families with the education that they deserve. This educational

process is transactional for us. We acknowledge that we are assets to our communities, but, more importantly, our *chispa* is fueled by what we get back from our communities through this work. This was further evidenced through the impacts of the pandemic, as teachers made great efforts to develop relationships with students and families in a virtual setting.

As a Latina educator, the development and implementation of this study fueled my *chispa* in many ways. It reestablished my commitment to serving urban communities, specifically those with Latina/o students and emergent bilinguals. Through the interview and data analysis processes, I was validated in my work as a Latina educator seeing that other Latina educators have similar professional missions as me. This realization created solidarity between my participants and me as we embraced that we were all working in community towards the same goal. Professionally, this work has informed my leadership practice as a school administrator. The findings of this study will support me as I work to recruit, develop, and retain effective urban teachers for my school sites. I am now better able to identify teachers like these participants to support the development of a greater community of culturally sustaining pedagogues. Consequently, I hope that my efforts to build this community will support a wide scale culture of asset-based practice and intellectualism. In community, educators can support each other in sparking, fueling, and protecting our *chispas* to create widespread change.

APPENDIX A

Email to Teachers

Dear RCESD Colleague,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Monica Munguia Valencia. I am a doctoral student at Loyola Marymount University and a vice principal in our district. I am writing to kindly request your participation in my doctoral research study titled "Exploring Veteran Urban Teachers' Experiences". As a site administrator, I understand and appreciate the efforts that all RCESD teachers have put forth to successfully navigate the current structure of schooling via distance learning. My study is an opportunity to celebrate and reflect upon your hard work, tenacity, and successes throughout the years as an experienced urban teacher.

This study will utilize a phenomenological qualitative research design to explore the personal and professional experiences of veteran urban teachers in order to gain a better understanding of how they manage stress and burnout while meeting the diverse needs of their students throughout their tenure.

Participants will be selected based on three criteria, which are as follows:
1. Veteran teacher: The teacher has at least ten years of teaching experience in an urban school.
2. Urban teacher: The teacher currently serves in a school with a student population that is comprised of a majority of minority students and a majority of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, as identified by free and reduced lunch qualification.
3. Culturally sustaining pedagogue: The teacher employs elements of culturally sustaining pedagogy as an instructional framework in order to meet the unique needs of urban students. The elements of culturally sustaining pedagogy include (1) critical centering on community languages, practices, and knowledges, (2) student and community agency and input, (3) historicized cultural and linguistic content and instruction, (4) capacity to contend with internalized oppressions, and (5) an ability to curricularize these four elements (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Given your experience in AESD, you have been identified as an experienced veteran teacher. I am pleased to invite you to participate in this study. Should you accept the invitation and be chosen for participation, you will be eligible to receive a $75 gift card of your choice after completing the following steps:
- Complete initial survey. 6 teachers will be selected from the initial survey.
- Selected teacher participants will:
    - Participate in three one on one 45-60 minute interviews and
    - Submit two instructional documents, such as lesson plans, student work samples, and/or recorded lessons.

If you are interested, please complete the linked survey by Thursday, September 24. I will contact you by Monday, September 28 if you have been selected to participate in this study. Interviews will take place between October 1 and November 20.

Your participation in this study will add to the current body of research in an effort to improve outcomes for our urban students and supports for urban teachers. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your name, title, and demographic information will be requested; however, your name will never be used in any public dissemination.

Feel free to contact me or my dissertation chair, Dr. Magaly Lavadenz (magaly.lavadenz@lmu.edu) with any questions you may have.

I appreciate your consideration to participate in this study. Thank you in advance!

Gratefully,
Monica Munguia Valencia

APPENDIX B

Screening Survey

Please answer the following questions as they apply to you. All information is confidential. Individual participants will not be identifiable in the final survey report.

1. Age
    Under 30
    31 to 35
    36 to 40
    41 to 45
    46 to 50
    50 to 55
    Over 55

2. Gender
    Male
    Female
    Other: _____
    Prefer not to say

3. Ethnicity
    White
    Hispanic/Latino
    Black
    Asian
    Filipino
    Pacific Islander
    American Indian/Alaska Native
    Other: _____

4. Education Level
    Bachelor's degree (BA, BS)
    Master's degree (MA, MS, MEd)
    Doctorate (EdD or PhD)
    Other: _____

5. Type of teaching credentials.
    Multiple Subject Credential
    Single Subject Credential
    Special Education Credential
    Other: _____

6. List additional certificates or authorizations that you have, if applicable.

7. Total years of classroom teaching experience
_____ years

8. Total years as a classroom teacher in current school district
_____ years

9. List your teaching assignments from throughout your career. To the best of your ability, please include year span, assignment/grade levels, and school names.

10. List any school site or district level committees that you have participated in or leadership positions that you have held outside of your classroom assignment from throughout your career. To the best of your ability, please include year span and names of committees and/or positions.

11. List a few examples of professional development trainings that you have attended in the past 10 years. To the best of your ability, please include the year that you attended, the name of the training, and a one sentence description of the training.

12. How often do you make connections to emergent bilinguals' primary languages during instruction?

    Never
    Rarely
    Sometimes
    Often
    Always

13. How often to do you modify adopted curriculum to incorporate students' cultural histories and experiences?

    Never
    Rarely
    Sometimes
    Often
    Always

14. How often do you engage student, family, and community input to inform your instructional decisions?

    Never
    Rarely
    Sometimes
    Often
    Always

15. How often do you challenge mainstream societal oppressions and stereotypes within your instruction?

    Never
    Rarely
    Sometimes
    Often
    Always

16. Briefly explain stand out lessons and/or units that you implement that focus on students' linguistic and cultural diversity.

17. Briefly explain how you engage students, families, and/or community stakeholders to inform your instructional practice.

18. If selected, are you willing to provide classroom artifacts that exemplify how you design instruction with a focus on students' linguistic and cultural diversity? (student work samples, lesson plans, and/or videos of recorded lessons)

    yes
    no

Interview Protocols

Interview 1: Life History
Purpose: Contextualize Participant's Experience
    1.1 How did you come to serve in an urban school?
    1.2 Tell me about your students and their families.
    1.3 How was your own experience in school in comparison to your work now as an urban
        teacher?
    1.4 What has led you to remain in an urban school setting for over ten years?
    1.5 During your career thus far, how have you developed in your practice to meet the diverse
        needs of your urban students?
    1.6 How have your personal experiences influenced you as a veteran urban teacher?
    1.7 How have your professional experiences influenced you as a veteran urban teacher?
    1.8 How have your personal and professional networks influenced you as an urban teacher?

Interview 2: Contemporary Experience
Purpose: Reconstruct Concrete Details
    2.1 Reconstruct a typical day in your life as a veteran urban teacher from the moment that
        you wake up to the time you fall asleep.
    2.2 How do you meet the diverse linguistic and cultural needs of your urban students?
    2.3 How do you engage students' families and/or the community as an urban teacher?
    2.4 Tell me about the professional and personal challenges you have faced as a veteran urban
        teacher.
    2.5 How do you manage these challenges?
    2.6 Tell me about a time that you overcame stress or burn out in your career.
    2.7 How does your personal life support your stress management?
    2.8 Why did you select the two instructional artifacts that you did?
    2.9 What decisions did you make in designing this lesson?

Interview 3: Reflection
Purpose: Meaning Making
    3.1 As a Latina teacher, how do you think you mitigate stress and/or burnout differently than
        other urban teachers?
    3.2 Now that you have talked about how you came to become a veteran urban teacher and
        what it is like for you, what does it mean to you to be a veteran urban teacher?
    3.3 Given the experiences and challenges you have described in being a veteran urban
        teacher, what does it mean to you to overcome stress and burn out personally and
        professionally?
    3.4 What support or training do you believe is beneficial specifically for novice urban
        teachers?
    3.5 What are the three most important things about urban teaching you would want others to
        know?

3.6 Given what you have reconstructed in these interviews, where do you see yourself going in the future as an urban educator?

3.7 Reflecting upon your career as an urban educator thus far, what is one word you would use to describe it? Why?

APPENDIX D

Field Notes Template

Interview Question	Nonverbal Observations	Highlights	Reactions/Connections

APPENDIX E

District Data Collection Approval for IRB Form

River City Elementary School District

Education Administration

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

PART1: Cover Page

Date of Submission	
Proposed Project Starting Date	
Proposed Project Ending Date	

Person(s) conducting the research:

Name:	
School Employees *Assignment:*	*Location:*
Address:	
Phone (Home):	Phone (Work):
Email:	

University or organization sponsoring the research:

Institution or organization:			
Institutional Review Board (IRB) required (check):	Yes	No	
Faculty Advisor:			
Address:			
Phone (Work)			
Email:			

Research Project

Title of the proposed project:
Ultimate purpose of the proposed study (master's thesis, doctoral thesis, journal publication, other):

PART 2. Scope of Study

Study Participants	Number	Selection Process
Students		
Staff/Others		
Parents		

Data Collection

Study Participants	Specific Data Required (e.g., test name, score type, year, demographic information needed, surveys, interviews, observations, other)
Students	
Staff/Others	
Parents	

Describe any survey instruments used (*survey instrument must be approved prior to administering*).

Describe interview process (if applicable).

How will you obtain consent from your proposed participants and their parents if participants are students?

How will you assure confidentiality of the information collected?

PART 3: Rationale for conducting the study

Hypothesis of the study:

<u>Brief summary</u> of the research design including statistical analysis procedures.

Please utilize one or more prominent research studies, articles, or books most pertinent to this field of research in

answering the following questions (attach additional pages if necessary):

- How will this study contribute to the River City School District?
- How does this study address one of River City School Districts goals or research priorities?

Assurances:

I understand that I am requesting approval to conduct a research project and if my request is granted, I agree to abide by all policies, rules and regulations of the district *including securing written parental permission prior to implementation of my project (if applicable), and maintaining the confidential nature of records and the privacy and rights of the individual and the school.*

Signed:_____

River City School District

Education Administration

Access to Confidential Data

Researcher:
Title of Proposed Project:

Justification: Educational Research

I understand that any unauthorized disclosure of confidential information is illegal as provided in the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. 1232 *eg. seq.* and in the implementing federal regulations found in 34 CFR Part 99.

In addition, I understand that any data, datasets or output reports that I, or any authorized representative, may generate using my passwords are confidential and the data are to be protected. I will not distribute to any unauthorized person any data or reports that I have access to or may generate using confidential data. I understand that I am responsible for any computer transactions performed as a result of access authorized by use of my sign-on(s)/password(s).

I hereby agree to abide by all policies, rules and regulations of the district including securing written parental permission prior to implementation of my project, and maintaining the confidential nature of records and the privacy and rights of the individual and the school. I understand that failure to abide by the requirements of this agreement may lead to the immediate revocation of approval for this study and further that any intentional, knowing, or negligent release of confidential student information to unauthorized persons may also subject me to a legal cause of action for violation of an individual's civil rights in addition to state or federal criminal penalties.

_____

Research Applicant's Signature   **Date**

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