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Protecting, Learning, and Connecting: A Portrait de Una Familia Bilingüe en Lenguaje Dual—Flor, Samuel, y Melanie

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Abstract

Educational research often presents hegemonic structures, narratives, and labels as necessary precursors for discussing the lived experiences of multiply-minoritized families in schools. Indeed, it is essential to be attuned to the malleable, historical, and punishing social and material mechanisms of multiple matrices of oppression that inform families' schooling and educational experiences. At the same time, this critical attunement can also be displayed through forms of expression that center the lived experiences of families as foundations for inquiring, studying, and reimagining dominant ways of knowing and being in the world. As part of these efforts, this article employs portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) to describe how one family—Flor, Melanie, and Samuel—challenges and reimagines forms of being, relating, and learning connected to dual language bilingual education and family-U.S. school relations. Following Lawrence-Lightfoot's (2005) comparison of portraiture's aesthetic wholeness to that of a tapestry, this portrait weaves field notes, transcripts, and memos from 2019 to 2022 to describe focal moments and interactions with Flor, Samuel, and Melanie. In the portrait, Flor, Samuel, and Melanie critiqued adult-centered family participation structures in school events and bounded forms of communication and interaction placed upon children during the school day. At the same time, this family reconfigured the purpose and relational dynamics within and outside the dual language bilingual program. Overall, Flor, Samuel, and Melanie show how possible worlds are already here because they have been born out of necessity among groups of people to survive. Their portrait demands that researchers and educational leaders become attuned to the possibilities for better living, caring, and relating with one another that have not been historically supported or cultivated but that can now act as portals for reimagining the purpose and nature of education as part of COVID-19 pandemic recovery efforts.

Keywords: dual language, families, bilingual, parent involvement, Latinx/e, mothers

It is lunchtime for the second-grade cohort at the Mills City Dual Language School.[1] During this time, I usually grab a chair in the corner of the school's main office and have a meal as I reply to texts and emails. However, my inbox is empty today, and there are no new messages. Closing my laptop, I realize I have the time, energy, and accessibility to enjoy lunch with the second-grade students in the school cafeteria. I have the affordance of not being a classroom teacher who is often swamped with grading, lesson planning, or trying to catch a moment to handle personal matters during my lunch hour. I pick up my water bottle and plastic container filled with leftovers from last night's dinner and head to the cafeteria. Before stepping into the cafeteria, I hear multiple voices of children engaging in conversations that represent a limitless range of topics, from the characters in the *Roblox* video game to the color schemes of bicycles. Walking into the cafeteria, I see children eating their school or home lunch together on round, white tables and cafeteria staff members wiping food trays by the serving table area. I feel some children's faces looking up at me and hear "Ms. Jasmine is here!" murmured around their tables. I wave my hand and try to give a quick "hello" to the children in my vicinity to limit my interrupting their flow of conversations.

I notice multiple open seats on the round, white table where three children—Alejandra, Monica, and Samuel—sit. "Hi! Is there anyone sitting in these seats?" I ask. Samuel informs me that the seats are indeed empty and asks if I am going to eat with them. I share with Samuel and the other two children that I wanted to know more about the structure of lunch, recess hour, and the activities that they engaged in during this time. "Also, ya'll always talk about loving lunchtime so much, so I would like to know more about why!" I exclaim. They give a quick giggle as they pick up their forks from their Styrofoam lunch trays. Meanwhile, I notice Monica's piercing, chestnut-colored eyes staring at my hands. She tells me, "I like your bracelets, Ms. Jasmine." Staring at my silver and rose quartz bracelets on my right hand, I disclose to the three children that my fondness for bracelets stems from my Ecuadorian family's history of making jewelry and using various metals and stones. Alejandra jumps in and says, "I think my mom has jewelry like that too, and I think I have some too at home."

In the middle of Alejandra's remarks, an adult standing by the lunch serving area walks over to our table and sits beside Samuel. While drinking his juice box, Samuel leans on the adult's shoulder as she states, "Yo también hago joyas así en la casa a lado de los otros trabajos que tengo." She smiles and glances at the rest of us. After offering to make me jewelry, she presents herself as "Flor, la mamá de Samuel y de Melanie." I find out from Flor and Samuel that Melanie is in first grade. As I finish eating my leftover spaghetti, Flor talks about her schedule and role at the school. She acts as a school aide for a couple of days of the week, focusing on first and second grade, the grade levels in which her children are currently enrolled.

"Quería estar más informada y ver cómo están mis hijos, entonces como tengo un poco de flexibilidad pregunté a Claudia [the family-school liaison] si había puestos y ahora aquí estoy," Flor discloses while wiping Samuel's purple juice mark off his lip with her finger. Along with her efforts to be informed about Samuel's and Melanie's learning and wellbeing, Flor tells me that she periodically gives reports to Alejandra's and Monica's parents about their children's daily schooling experiences over phone calls or during dismissal. Samuel chimes in and says, "We all live close to each other and around here, by the school." Flor starts asking me about my role in the school and the Ecuadorian regions my family is from. "Oh, she works with us, Mom. Like a teacher," Samuel clarifies. I nod sideways and give a brief overview of my roles at the school, "Soy una voluntaria y voy a sustituir. Fui maestra pero ahora estoy otra vez en la escuela y haciendo un proyecto sobre la escuela para mi certificado del doctorado."

[1] All names for participants and sites are pseudonyms.

Outside our table, the cafeteria staff is wiping tables and throwing out lingering napkins and plastic wrappers into a garbage container being wheeled around by students. Noticing that the garbage can is now next to our table, Flor quickly throws out our scattered, empty plates and trays. As she gets up from her seat, Flor pats Samuel's shoulder and tells me, "Bueno pues, tengo que ayudar antes que el otro grado venga. ¡Gusto de conversar!" "¡Igualmente, Flor!" I exclaim while gulping down some water from my water bottle and getting up from my seat. I thank Alejandra, Samuel, and Monica for allowing me to sit with them for lunch and remind them that I would see them later after their time at the gym for recess.

Since this initial conversation with Flor during Fall 2019, she and I have continued learning more about each other's personal and professional trajectories through our conversations during school-wide and classroom events. At the same time, I learned from her children, Samuel and Melanie, as I volunteered and substitute-taught for their classes from Fall 2019 to Fall 2021. In this paper, I present a portrait (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) that highlights several of my experiences and interactions with this family, who were participants of a three-year ethnographic study (2019-2022) about family engagement policy and appropriation in the Mills City Dual Language School (*see* Alvarado, 2022). Specifically, this portrait describes how Flor, Samuel, and Melanie, as a family and individual members of this family, make sense of their relations with schooling and how they define themselves with various groups of people with particular attention to ethnoracial, heritage, and language groups. This narrative reports how one family attempts to challenge, resist, and reimagine other forms of being, relating, and learning as they negotiate dominant conceptualizations and approaches to family-school relations that permeate their experiences within and outside a dual language bilingual program, the Mills City Dual Language School. Their negotiations demonstrate the importance of educational leaders (e.g., educators, administrators, researchers, and policymakers) critically attuning to the sophisticated and historicized forms of refusal and survival of Latinx and racially minoritized families that permeate within and outside bilingual programs as foundations for liberatory education and social transformation.[2]

Relevant Literature

Dominant Approaches and Definitions for Family-School Relations

Family-school relations in the U.S. have been labeled, defined, and discussed by researchers, policymakers, and educators in a variety of ways. Terms such as *parent involvement* (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Epstein, 1986; López, 2001), *home-school relations* (Graue, 2005; Graue & Oen, 2009; Graue & Sherfinski, 2011), *home-school-community partnerships* (Epstein, 1995; Epstein & Sanders, 2006), and *family engagement* (Mapp, 2012; Olivos et al., 2011), among

[2] I use the terms Hispanic, Latina/o/e, and Latinx based on their direct citation by participants,scholars, and educational agencies. During my interpretations and arguments, I use Latinx to refer to people who currently live in the U.S., are read as having a connection to the Spanish language, and whose ancestry or homelands are places that have experienced Spanish colonialisms and multiple colonialisms (Chávez-Moreno, 2021). I use Latinx as a gender-expansive term and in opposition to the stigmatization of U.S.-Spanish language (which can be reified when favoring Latine with the rationale that it conforms to the rules of standardized European Spanish). I use the term racially minoritized to refer to groups of people who are positioned as foreign and inferior based on notions of Whiteness and European exceptionalism.

others, have been used to describe the critical relationship between families, communities, and schools and relate to the dominant family-school relation discourse.

However, the discourse on family-school relations is much more than discussing how parents should interact with schools. As Nakagawa (2000) states,

> The discourse of parent involvement in schools has created particular definitions and understandings of legitimate parent involvement, as well as commonsensical notions of a good parent. This discourse structures how various educational stakeholders approach the family-school relationship prior to any interactions at the school level. (p. 445)

Kainz and Aikens (2007) concur with Nakagawa (2000) by stating that the dominant notions of family-school relations in policy, research, and practice have the power to produce actions or behaviors and establish seemingly legitimate categories for families that serve to maintain the interests of dominant groups and reproduce societal inequities. Specifically, this discourse creates representations of family engagement in U.S. schools that privilege the behaviors, experiences, and practices of White, upper- and middle-class families in schools. Such behaviors and practices revolve around being physically present at the school and adhering to linguistically rigid and imposed forms of communication by school staff and administrators. This discourse fails to address the race and class power-relations that permeate educational institutions and neighborhoods. As a result, racially and linguistically minoritized families, especially those who are socioeconomically marginalized, are mispositioned as under-engaged, apathetic about education, or as subjects of intervention who must be indoctrinated into roles and responsibilities demanded by schools (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Doucet, 2011; López, 2001).

Experiences and Perspectives of Families in Bilingual Programs

In response to these dominant approaches and definitions for family-school relations in policy, research, and practice, there is an increasing number of studies that emphasize the salience of race and racialization for racially minoritized parents when they engage with U.S. schools and their children's schooling experiences (McCarthy Foubert, 2019; Posey-Maddox, 2017; Reynolds, 2015). For instance, several sociological studies (e.g., Posey-Maddox, 2014, 2017; Reynolds, 2014, 2015) have engaged with critical race frameworks to show the multiple ways in which families described as Black encourage their children's educational success in and out of school. For example, Reynolds (2010, 2014, 2015) reported on experiences of families described as Black middle-class in a primarily White suburban school district referred to as Coolwater. In her article, Reynolds (2010) described how these families helped their children understand their experiences with racial microaggressions at school. She specifically explained their efforts to engage in *impression management*, "a process whereby [they] try to control the impressions others form about them" (Reynolds, 2010, p. 154). Focusing on the school engagement experiences of fathers described as Black and from various socioeconomic groups, Posey-Maddox (2017) noted their multi-faceted forms of support and care, which included "communicating their high expectations, monitoring racial biases from school staff members, and advocating on behalf of their children and other Black children in the school district" (p. 6).

In the field of bilingual education, there is emergent research that has examined the intersections of language, race, and class within the relations and experiences of families in two-way dual language bilingual education, where children from multiple racial, cultural, and economic groups are educated together with the goals of bilingualism and biliteracy (e.g., Burns, 2017;

Chaparro, 2019; Muro, 2016; Shannon, 2011). Multiple reports about bilingualism's cognitive and economic value in a globalized society have branded two-way dual language bilingual programs as boutique programs where students designated as White, English-speaking children can learn another language (Flores & García, 2017). Shannon (2011) and Burns (2017) reported how parents labeled as White and English-speaking occupied leadership positions in school organizations, including parent-teacher associations, and were invited by administrators to be part of decision-making processes for reforms and initiatives in the two-way dual language bilingual programs.

Examining the race relations and integration of parents designated as White and families read as Latinx, Muro (2016) noted that these parents engaged in symbolic integration, the "polite [and] surface-level… interactions… that are enjoyable, voluntary, and additive" (p. 517), while racial prejudice and stratification remained entrenched. Muro (2016) reported that families read as White were commended for their bilingualism and attempts to learn about the cultural practices of families referred to as Latinx. However, families described as Latinx did not mention any praise from school actors about their bilingualism; rather, these families displayed their pride in their children's bilingualism. Chaparro (2019) suggested that differences in "background experiences, migration trajectories, and access to resources" (p. 42) between families regarded as Latinx and those read as White lead to different kinds of pressures, needs, and demands on two-way dual language bilingual programs and its staff members.

The aforementioned studies have demonstrated the race-class inequities and power relations in two-way dual language bilingual programs in their efforts to demand more equitable and affirming schooling experiences for multiply-minoritized families. Indeed, it is important to examine the malleable, historical, and punishing mechanisms of race-class oppression that inform the experiences of families in bilingual educational settings. At the same time, as Chaparro (2020) noted, this focus can also be displayed through deep forms of expression that center and frame the lives, histories, and perspectives of families as foundations for reflecting, learning, and reimagining dominant forms of knowledge and ways of being in the world. In relation, I employ portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997) to present the beauty, struggle, and justice-oriented potential within one family's—Flor's, Samuel's, and Melanie's—experiences in challenging, resisting, and reimagining dominant and deficit-based family-bilingual school relations. Indeed, this story is about one family and does not intend to make assumptions about all families in bilingual programs or U.S. schools. Congruent with Lawrence-Lightfoot's and Davis's (1997) aims for portraiture as a method, my hope is that this portrait elicits further understandings, reflections, and connections that challenge static and problematic conceptualizations and approaches for family-bilingual school relations. The deficit viewpoints, practices, and systems aimed to relegate certain individuals and groups of people as inferior beings in schools and, more broadly, in society are directly questioned and unsettled by the subtlety of detail in this portrait.

Conceptual Framework

This portrait primarily draws on Daniels's and Varghese's (2019) raciolinguicized subjectivities and Butler's (1993) theory of performativity to describe how Flor, Melanie, and Samuel made sense of behaviors, knowledge forms, and practices connected to dominant family-school relations and how they defined themselves with language, heritage, and ethnoracial groups. Informed by Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies, Daniels and Varghese (2019) conceptualized raciolinguicized subjectivities to highlight the shifting nature of individuals' negotiation of their sense of selves and relations with forms of languaging and ethnoracial groups

(e.g., Black, Hispanic, Latino/a/x, African American). They note how this process also promotes the emergence of other sense of selves (or subjectivities) that challenge dominant discourses, which are dominant understandings, behaviors, and relations in society. Daniels and Varghese (2019) do not presuppose that an individual has sovereign agency in a globalized racist-capitalist society where Whiteness shifts over time and place. Instead, they note how individuals may challenge and present other forms of thought, ways of being, and relations despite the malleable and everyday presence of White supremacy attempting to fix race onto bodies and assert material and social consequences based on this placement.

As people negotiate their sense of selves and relations in society, Butler (1993), through the theory of performativity, elaborates how these individuals are often linguistically hailed into certain ways of being through dominant discourses. This hailing can function without an individual's acknowledgment. For example, based on Butler's (1993) theory of performativity, if someone does not notice or respond to a "hey you," this lack of acknowledgment of the hailing does not negate the expected way of existing, understanding, and relating that is connected to it. Butler (1993) notes that even when an individual names the structures, actors, and processes that hailed them/him/her into certain social norms, these recitations may reproduce and, at times, contest these norms. The repetitions of norms or performances are not always identical in hailing groups and individuals into expected orders of social existence. Sometimes they may produce another form of being in the world, an alternate subjectivity. In their argument for performance framings of gender, Butler (1993) argues that while a drag show can be an opportunity to subvert heterosexual gender norms and frame gendering as a fluid process, it can also potentially reinforce such norms if the subversion is ignored, misunderstood, or locally stigmatized by actors, institutions, and policies. As such, the extent to which an individual performance may be regarded as a resistant act is very dependent on the extent to which it is socially recognized as one. In regard to race, while there is an instability in the ways that discourses attempt to racialize individuals and groups of people, the everyday and perpetual exercise of White supremacy through different institutions, policies, and interactions among people constrain the ways in which racially minoritized groups resist racism and racialization and its accompanied material and social effects.

For this portrait, I describe how Flor, Melanie, and Samuel negotiate dominant discourses, or dominant viewpoints, relations, and approaches for family-school relations that permeate a dual language bilingual program. I highlight how these facets that compose dominant family-school relations produce and place certain norms for families' roles, knowledge forms, and practices connected to schooling. Within this process, these norms racialize and linguicize families. In relation, I report how Flor, Melanie, and Samuel contest racialized and linguicized norms as they make sense of themselves as individuals and as members of a collective; of a family, augmented by the notion of collective subjectivity; and of a collective sense of self (Morales & Harris, 2014; Nightingale, 2011). Through this negotiation and contestation manifested in their interactions and relations with others and multimodal sources (e.g., handouts, forms, drawings, texts), I note how they reimagine ways of being, learning, and relationships in schools and, more broadly, in a globalized racist-capitalist society. Still, the degree to which these actions are read as negotiations, contestations, and reimaginations is dependent on their social negotiation and codification by actors, institutions, and policies. I do not presuppose that families have total agency in contesting the social and material effects that permeate enduring, raced-class relations, structures, and processes. Instead, I intend to highlight how one family negotiates dominant racialized and linguicized knowledge forms, practices, and relations across different moments in efforts to learn about other possibilities for relationships with schooling and learning that are beyond narrow, hegemonic, White-based framings of family engagement often found in U.S. schools, including

dual language bilingual programs. As such, I highlight focal interactions and understandings of one family that present possibilities toward moving in expansive ways of framing languaging, forms of learning, and groups of people.

Neighborhood and School

This narrative was generated from a three-year ethnographic study (2019-2022) about the relations, language practices, and experiences of families in the Mills City Dual Language School, a two-way dual language bilingual program in a U.S. Northeastern neighborhood, Mills City. The residential composition of the neighborhood is designated as 72.3% White, 13.5% Hispanic/Latino, 11.4% Asian, 7.7% Black/African- American, 3.3% Mixed-Race, and .3% American Indian and Alaska Native (citation withheld).[3] A third of the neighborhood residents are born outside of the U.S. (citation withheld). In relation, a third of residents speak another language besides English (citation withheld).

Notably, Mills City has experienced a steady decline in the Black and Latinx populations and an increase in the White population over the past four years (citation withheld). In relation, economic disparities continue to increase in the neighborhood and affect the quality of life for its residents. For instance, the percentage of residents living in poverty has increased from 7% in 1990 to 11% in 2020 (citation withheld). The median rent soared from $1,050 in 1990 to $1,700 in 2020, and the median home price rose from $292,000 to $425,000 (citation withheld). According to criteria from the Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University (2019), Mills City is considered a gentrifying neighborhood because these aforementioned statistics reveal that the socioeconomic changes exceed the changes in the median house prices, rents, and incomes of its nearby major metropolitan city.

The dual language bilingual program is a 90:10 model, in which the amount of heritage language instruction (Spanish) decreases yearly as teaching in English increases, until there is a 50:50 balance of the languages in grades four and five. The school's student population is classified by the State Department of Education as 70% Hispanic, 20% White, 4% African American, 3% Multi-Race, and 3% Asian (citation withheld). Sixty percent of students are designated as economically disadvantaged (citation withheld). Sixty-three percent of students are classified as not having the English language as their first language (citation withheld).

Since its inception, the dual language bilingual program's cohort of 50 students has been chosen by a lottery in early August before the school year begins. The school principal, school office staff, and kindergarten teachers plan the Kindergarten Lottery. If a child is chosen from the lottery and has a younger sibling, the younger sibling can bypass the lottery and enroll in their corresponding kindergarten cohort. Lotteries are conducted separately by assigned language dominance, English or Spanish. A student's dominant language is determined by using parents'/guardians' answers to the following question on the home language survey: "What language did your child first understand and speak?" If a parent/guardian choses Spanish in the survey, their child is coded as a Spanish speaker and potentially an English Learner to later take a state-adopted language screener. The student's score on the screener determines if she/he/they obtain the label, English Learner. Regardless of the English Learner label, children and their families retain the label of English and Spanish speaker throughout their time in the program.

[3] To protect the anonymity of the focal participants and neighborhood, I do not explicitly cite references that I used to describe them.

Relationships with Place and Participants

I consider myself a "Breezer," which many Mills City residents regularly use to describe someone who did not grow up in the neighborhood but resides there and who may move to another place in the future. Additionally, I lived near the focal dual language bilingual program, about a six-minute drive from the school. I formed relationships and interacted with various families, students, and school staff at the dual language bilingual program due to my multiple roles as a volunteer, substitute teacher, principal intern, and doctoral researcher from 2019 to 2022. As part of these roles, I participated in class activities across grade levels and school-related meetings and events (e.g., monthly staff meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and field trips). Although this narrative focuses on Flor's, Melanie's, and Samuel's experiences and understandings of their social identifications and relationships in the dual language bilingual program, below is an overview of other school members mentioned in the portrait.

Table 1
Secondary participants/school members

Name	Ethnic/racial self-identification	Professional occupation	Relation with Mills City (Focal neighborhood)
Claudia	Hispana/ Guatemalan	Family-school liaison	Lives and works in Mills City
Kiara	Latina/Dominican	Second grade-teacher	Lives and works in Mills City
Marco	Latino/Puerto Rican	School security guard	Lives and works in Mills City
Miguel	Guatemalan	Construction worker	Lives and works in Mills City
Juliana	Afro-Latina/ Dominican	Third-grade teacher	Works in Mills City
Cara	White/Italian	Second-grade teacher	Works in Mills City

As described in the introduction, I met Flor, Melanie, and Samuel when I started participating in classroom and school-related activities in the 2019-2020 school year. According to school documents, Melanie, Flor, and Samuel are collectively classified as a Hispanic and Spanish speaking, English Learner family. In contrast, this family does not present themselves under this classification. Instead, Melanie and Samuel self-identify as "from Guatemala and from Mills City." Their mother, Flor, also self-identifies from Mills City but positions herself as Guatemalan and her children as having strong family ties to her homeland. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic limiting in-person interactions during winter 2022, I maintained active communication with them through phone (including Facetime), text, or email. Although Flor associated me as an assistant teacher, she regularly invited me to her house during Fall 2019 and from Summer 2020 to Spring 2022 to answer questions about school policies and provide support on technology and content or literacy curriculum. With regard to languaging, I communicated with Flor, Melanie, and Samuel in English and Spanish.

Utilizing Portraiture to Tell *a* Story

It is intentional that I frame this article as *a* story instead of *the* story. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) describe how, through portraiture, an incompleteness is made apparent, noting that although researchers have insights, they are not the only knowers. In such a way, portraiture allows for deep listening, observing, and learning with and alongside participating and honoring the specificity of people's experiences, insights, and personhood.

Portraiture is part of a broad group of methods conceptualized by members of multiple-minoritized groups (e.g., Brayboy, 2006; Ross, 2003; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) that engage in witnessing and storytelling as levers for teaching, learning, and collectivity, part of larger efforts for survivance and self-determination. It combines empirical description and aesthetic expression to create a narrative that captures the complexity and multidimensionality of human experience and organizational life (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Engaging in portraiture helped me reconcile how to write in a way where I could express my interpretations of how families made sense of themselves and worked through complicated—often harmful—narratives and material effects while limiting as best as I could to present myself as *the* source of a bounded, all-knowing truth. Further, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis establish (1997), that "[the portraitist assumes] that the… qualities… of strength, health, and productivity… will always be imbued with flaws, weaknesses, and inconsistencies" (p. 142). They consider this assumption as *searching for goodness* (Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Inspired by this stance, I generated this portrait with the assumption that there would be challenges, contradictions, and setbacks in how Flor, Samuel, and Melanie attempt to reimagine and contest dominant discourses about themselves, other families, and their relations with schooling.

On a broader level, this portrait aimed to describe the relationships among groups of people and institutional and systemic forms of power. My attunement to this focus of inquiry guiding the specific topic of study and generation of portraits was influenced by Tuck's and Yang's (2014a) claims about "settler colonial knowledge [and production] for the academy... disguised [as] 'objective knowledge' for 'the public'" (p. 813). Specifically, Tuck and Yang (2014a) warn about social science research in a settler-colonial society naturalizing knowledge extraction and governance of minoritized groups. Consequently, I limited over-relying on mechanistic coding schemes to prevent the focal portraits from becoming fragmented expressions of people's knowledges and experiences filled with pain and suffering for the gaze and benefit of its readers.

This stance follows Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1997) comparison of portraiture's aesthetic wholeness to that of a tapestry, which emphasizes identifying and weaving different forms of knowledge to generate coherent yet beautifully intricate representations of people's complex experiences. In turn, I describe focal moments and interactions with Flor, Samuel, and Melanie over two and a half years by carefully selecting and weaving field notes, transcripts, and memos together. My process of writing memos as I engaged with data and codes helped me crystalize meaning to address the questions and focus of this study (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014). Throughout all stages of the analytical process, I wrote memos where I described patterns, tensions, and disjunctures emerging from data about Flor, Samuel, and Melanie, my evolving relationships with them, and connections from theories, readings, and interactions (Jackson & Mazzei, 2011). Part of this work was reflecting on how specific excerpts and incidents reflected various matrices of oppression (e.g., White supremacy, racialization, linguicism, economic stratification) and participants' agency in grappling with the material and social effects from oppressive structures, norms, and practices.

Consistent with the nature of portraiture's blending aesthetics with social science research, I do not include citations for these levers of knowledge generation. Additionally, my voice, "as witness, as interpretation, and in conversation" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 2005, p. 10), is woven throughout each portrait. As Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (2007) establish, the portraitist uses these aspects of voice to explicitly acknowledge his, her, or their partiality and use of self as a primary research source. Lastly, the subsequent interactions and experiences in this portrait occur within and outside the Mills City Dual Language School, demonstrating that families' negotiation of their relations with schooling is a process that is not physically bound to one place (Alvarado, 2024). As such, the following portraits are titled based on the nature of the place and purpose of focal interactions with Flor, Samuel, and Melanie: Recess Time; Cafecito, Pan, y Lectura; and Snack Time.

Recess Time

I turn around to close the playground gates. Behind me, I hear Kiara, the second-grade teacher, yell, "Alright, second grade. Go play!" The children in the second-grade cohort scatter, with some of them throwing their lunch boxes by the bench closest to the playground gates. Children in second grade through fifth grade have recess in the neighborhood playground three blocks from the Mills City Dual Language School. At least three adults accompany students to the playground: one teacher; the school security guard, Marco; and a school aide. On the days when she is at the school as an aide, Flor accompanies the first and second-grade cohorts, the grade levels of Samuel and Melanie, to the park.

After closing the gates, I turn and look around the playground. I notice students are in small and large groups in various areas of the park. A multitude of sounds saturates the space. I hear laughing, shouting, singing of melodies, quick exclamatory remarks, and commands. Pairs of children are taking turns pushing each other on the swings. Others are hanging on monkey bars while their peers observe them from below. Next to the monkey bars, there are two slides where several students are trying to slide down, while some of their classmates climb up the same slide. I walk over to the slides and hear Kiara raising her voice to encourage the children to go down the slides in one direction to avoid injuries. We then look over the basketball area and notice that Flor, Marco, and a cluster of students are standing by the court's edges. Kiara asks, "Hey, can you go check that out? Call me if there is a big issue." "Sure! No problem," I respond and quickly walk over to the basketball court.

As I scurry toward the courts, I see Marco walking towards me, dressed in a black suit and wearing his trademark sunglasses. When we approach each other, Marco tells me, "It's all good now, Jasmine. Flor talked to the men that were playing basketball." He then asks me if I could accompany Flor and supervise the children by the basketball courts because he has to rush to the police precinct for required training. I accept his request, but I am still confused about what is happening in the basketball area. Once I get there, I notice a line of young adult men sitting by the concrete steps leading into the basketball court. They are talking to each other while looking at the court filled with children. Dressed in a dark, long red coat, Flor is quietly standing next to them. Her eyes are laser-focused on the children running and kicking a soccer ball. Beneath each basketball hoop, there are white futsal nets. One child is acting as a goalie for each net. Four children are on each side of the court, aiming to score a goal on the opposing side.

One of the children playing is Samuel, Flor's son, who has disclosed his love for futsal in prior conversations. In fact, he is a member of a children's futsal team that represents the Mills City

community in a youth league. For Samuel, futsal is a sport that connects him with many loved ones and members of various communities. For instance, he once stated, "It's awesome being able to play something you really like to do and be able to hang out with people like my friends. Also, it's cool I can do something for Mills City." Samuel sees his participation in the youth futsal league as a way to foster relationships with Mills City members. He also mentioned, "There are not a lot of sports for kids to join and I like to show people what we know about futsal. I like for people to come see us and enjoy watching us play." Although Samuel does not know everyone from Mills City who attends the games, he often sees these members when he walks with his family around the main commercial streets: "I know more of Mills City because of these games because I see people who come to the games, but I do not know them well when I go to walk with my mom and sister around Franklin Street."

Samuel shares his father's great interest in futsal: "My dad loves futsal! When he has the time and energy, we play together. It's definitely when he has energy because he works hard." Miguel, Samuel's father, works in construction, particularly building and renovating houses and apartments. His sporadic and lengthy work schedule often conflicts with Samuel's routine. When their schedules are compatible, Miguel invites Samuel to practice futsal drills in their backyard or at the nearby public playground. Notably, Samuel recalled a moment with Miguel that heavily impacted his decision to consistently play futsal during recess:

> One day, I think a Saturday, my dad and I were doing some drills. He explained that I was getting better at me using both my feet to kick the ball. He told me that even when he is not there with me that I should practice and to remember that he is there with me. So, I try to practice in recess because I want to show my dad what I learned and make him proud. I think about him a lot as I play in recess. It's like he is there with me.

Samuel views recess as an opportunity "to practice his futsal skills" as part of greater efforts to develop his abilities as a futsal player and deepen his bond with his father. Specifically, he aims to show Miguel how he carefully listens and follows his advice on their shared hobby. While Samuel follows the structured time and space for recess, his engagement with futsal exposes the multiplicity of relations he has with friends, his father, and members within and across neighborhoods. Samuel's thoughts about his father when he plays futsal during the school day demonstrate how he sustains a strong bond with his father. As such, Samuel's actions and memories challenge the dominant expectation in schools about children conforming to a complete separation from their families as part of their role as students during the school day.

"¡Vamos Samuel! Trata de pasar la bola a Jonathan," shouts Flor as I approach and stand next to her. She nods at me, saying, "Ms. Jasmine, por fin están jugando los niños. ¡Estaba muy preocupada que los niños no iban a tener tiempo para jugar!" Flor explains how the young adult men sitting by the concrete steps next to the basketball court/futsal area were playing basketball when she and the children arrived. She discloses how she had to grab the young adults' attention to ask them if the children could use the basketball courts for a brief period:

> Tenía que llamarles la atención porque no era justo para los niños. Les dije que si podían darnos el espacio por unos 15 minutos porque nosotros no tenemos la flexibilidad de tiempo como ellos. ¡Qué bueno que ellos no se opusieron y estuvieron calmados!

Students usually spend 20 minutes in the playground and basketball court/futsal area because it usually takes 10 minutes to walk with them to and from the dual language bilingual school. There

are no explicit rules or procedures for sharing the playground area, and thus, people are expected to negotiate the usage of the public space.

Flor views the 20 minutes that students have to play at the playground as a crucial part of the day: "Ellos necesitan tiempo para relajarse, ser niños. Eso ayuda a mantener su salud. Es necesario que nosotros también protegemos este tiempo para ellos, no solo ver no más cómo la escuela espera." During these remarks, I notice Flor's stern face and one of her hands shaking up and down. It seems important to her that adult members of the school actively ensure that children have some time during the day where they have autonomy in the activities they engage in with their peers. She defies the dominant expectation in schools of being an adult staff member or family member who only surveils students by actively reconfiguring a public space to ensure the development and wellbeing of children.

Flor often thinks about her K-12 schooling experiences in Guatemala during recess and throughout her day at the dual language bilingual school. She leverages these memories as reminders of ensuring that children feel supported and safe at the school: "Quiero que los niños, no solos los míos, se sientan bien. Nosotros queremos que ellos estén felices y puedan explorar lo que ellos quieran, algo que no tuve la oportunidad en Guatemala." When she was a student in Guatemala, Flor did not feel she could actively choose the topics or activities that she wanted to further engage and learn at school. She hopes to help expand opportunities for children at the dual language bilingual school to pursue desired questions and goals during their structured daily schedule. It seems that Flor tries to contest being positioned as a regulator of children's learning and development: "No es solo académico que debe importar en las escuelas. Hay mucho más que ayuda al niño a florecer a una buena persona como ayudar a los demás."

Flor reiterates "no es solo académico que debe importar en las escuela" from a previous conversation as we continue to watch the children play futsal. Flor then discloses how she tries to protect the few opportunities that children have during the school day to choose their activities. She clarifies how she wants to have other responsibilities and roles at the school:

> Trato de darles más libertad cuando puedo proteger el tiempo de ellos. Pero muchas veces durante el día escolar tengo que seguir donde la escuela quiera que haga como cuidadora. Muchas veces estoy parada allí y quisiera hacer más.

I wonder and ask if she has shared these sentiments with other members of the school. Flor slowly turns toward me and expresses her doubts that her opinions would be taken seriously given the constrained roles placed upon her by the school. I deeply listen to Flor's remarks: "No quiero molestar con las opiniones, especialmente porque esperan que cumpla con el rol y horario que me dan. No quiero meterme en problemas." Hearing Flor's remarks, I am concerned that someone like her, a parent/caretaker/family member, who is also an official staff member of the school suspects that she will endure material and social consequences for voicing her perspectives and concerns about students' lack of autonomy in their schooling and educational experiences.

I gently nod and press my lips, trying to affirm her sentiments and express my discontent with this situation. Flor touches my shoulder, tilts her head, and says, "Vamos a enfocarnos en cosas buenas, Ms. Jasmine. ¡Miremos cómo va el juego!" She then asks Jonathan, one of the children playing futsal, about the score of the game. He explains that there is a tie, 2-2, and that the children are going to move forward with their "sudden death," which means that each team will have one of their players try to score a goal to win. The rest of the players come toward Flor and me to watch their teammates try to score for the win. After two tries, one of the players scores for their team, the team of which Samuel is a member. I notice Flor throw her hands up in excitement, but then, she

tells all of the children: "¡Buen trabajo chicos! ¡Qué partido!" She looks backward toward the playground area and realizes that the other second graders are lining up. She tells the children to quickly gather their belongings and walk toward the playground.

As we make our way toward Ms. Kiara (the second-grade teacher) and the other children, I hear Flor ask Samuel, "¿Tuviste un buen tiempo?" I notice Samuel's beaming face as he talks to his mother. I am unable to hear him due to the other multiple conversations occurring among the other children. Still, I think about how Flor and Samuel are confined by dominant expectations of how they should act and present themselves as members of the dual language bilingual program during recess. Within their compliance to the policies, structures, and routines embedded within the recess period, Flor and Samuel expand the ways they understand themselves, beyond student and staff member, such as being a soccer player, a son, a protector, a former student, a member of Mills City and of Guatemala. They also unpack histories, relationships, and experiences behind their recess practices. Through this unraveling, Flor and Samuel point out how recess can be a time to honor and leverage relationships with loved ones, experiences with members of multiple communities, understandings from previous schooling experiences, and goals for their activities and interests.

Cafecito, Pan y Lectura

I lean my head on the yellow wall, trying to hide my sleepiness from spending too much time watching Netflix last night. However, I know my efforts are futile because Flor immediately offered me "cafecito para tomar y pan con queso" when I arrived. I could not say no, especially since I did not have my morning cup of coffee to boost my energy levels. Flor giggles as she notices me yawning while seated at her brown, wooden kitchen table. Embarrassed, I reply, "¡Flor, estaba viendo la televisión hasta tarde y fue por gusto! No había nada bueno." Strong smells of hazelnut permeate the kitchen. Lots of vapor is coming out of the black coffee pot on the kitchen stove. Flor grabs a clay cup hanging from a hook above the kitchen sink and pours the hazelnut coffee. Placing the cup of coffee and plate of pan de queso in front of me, she tells me, "Aquí estamos para ayudarnos y no juzgar. Pero sí da risa sus bostezos."

I thank Flor for her generosity and start to sip on the cup of hazelnut coffee. She tells me, "Es un placer," and then grabs a wooden chair to sit across from me. Flor explains that she bought the pan con queso from a nearby Guatemalan bakery, where she usually interacts with other families from the Mills City Dual Language School: "Hago conversación con las familias y algunas veces me hacen preguntas de la escuela como soy una aide." After I inquire about the types of questions that families ask her, Flor discloses how families "muchas veces quieren saber más sobre las cosas que los niños aprenden en cada materia y preguntan sobre recursos académicos en la comunidad. La información que nos mandan no es clara." She goes on to argue that the school's presentation of information is limiting for "las familias que prefieren hablar el español." Currently, the school's messages and newsletters for families uphold a rigid separation between standardized versions of English and Spanish and are very technologically-dependent.

Flor notes how the dual language bilingual program favors a specific variety of Spanish in their communicative approaches with families: "Mira, Ms. Jasmine, aunque muchas materias son en español, es un tipo que ellos no entienden. Muchos de nosotros somos de Centro América y usamos otras palabras." Her comments make me reflect upon the countless times I have witnessed staff members click on translation tabs for Spanish "Spain version" when drafting messages or letters. Even though Claudia, the family-school liaison, regards herself as speaking Spanish in ways that resonate with her Guatemalan roots, information and messages sent to families are often sent by

other school staff without regarding Claudia's expertise and without experience in communicating across different varieties of Spanish. Additionally, staff members rarely approach families for their feedback about the forms, content, and language of the school's communicative tools. The extremity of how families from linguistically and racially minoritized groups are positioned to be compliant receivers of information communicated by the school is exemplified in how Flor, an official staff member, is not presented with opportunities to make decisions about the dual language bilingual school's communicative approaches.

I suddenly notice a Guatemalan flag taped above us on the yellow kitchen wall. Flor stares at the flag as she sighs. Looking up at the flag, I ask her how she tries to inform herself about the curriculum and programming at the school. Flor presents me with a comprehensive approach for obtaining information related to curricular and instructional approaches as well as events and programming at the bilingual program:

> Bueno pues trato de preguntar a las maestras durante recreo y salida. También mando mensajes por text a Claudia [family-school liaison] sobre cosas. Si no puedo hablar con estas personas porque unas veces están ocupados o no me responden entonces conozco a otros padres de los otros grados y pregunto a ellos para tener la información.

Following these remarks, Flor emphasizes how regardless of being "una ayudante para la escuela, siento que es mi deber saber lo que pasa en la escuela." I hear a sense of commitment from Flor in rupturing norms, structures, and practices that justify the separation of schools and communities, and asymmetrical language and communication norms.

Flor glances at me and then starts to talk about the nature of languaging and its connection to her approach of being informed about the school: "Bueno pues, trato lo que puedo para estar informada, aunque no se bien el inglés o español. Uso todo lo que tengo para comunicarme." After I ask her for clarification about what she means by "todo lo que tengo," Flor explains that she leverages her dynamic linguistic repertoire and knowledge of digital literacies, expanded in her remarks: "Bueno todas las palabras que sé en ambos idiomas y también como sé usar varios apps en el teléfono, trato de usar lo que me ayuda." I am reminded of our previous conversations where Flor disclosed she did not read with anyone in her household during her K-12 schooling because her "papás no sabían leer y tuve que concentrarme en trabajar para mantenerme y a mis papás." Despite her K-12 schooling experiences, Flor strategically employs her dynamic languaging and literacies to foster relations and disseminate knowledge across families of the dual language bilingual program.

"¿Vas a la reunión sobre escogiendo el nombre de la escuela?" Flor asks while squinting her eyes at me. After asking about the time and date, she tells me that the meeting is to decide on a new name for the school. There are two meetings on separate days for this issue. Elected leaders of the parent-teacher group, along with teacher representatives, are hosting these events. The elected leaders of the parent-teacher group, mostly composed of people from White and middle-class groups, have argued for a name change of the dual language bilingual program to one that incorporates the name of a renowned Latinx person.

When I ask about her participation in other events or meetings held at the school for families, Flor expands on multiple reasons for her limited attendance: "Me han preguntado de asistir a planear pero prefiero contribuir a mi manera, a mi tiempo. Ud. sabe, tener control de mi horario. Los días cuando no trabajo en lenguaje dual estoy concentrada en mi negocio de pupusas." I am struck by Flor's use of her phrase "control de mi horario," and think about how the scheduling of events and programs intended for families are created by a few members of the school. Given her

comments about scheduling conflicts, I am curious if Flor's regard toward the family-school initiatives would be different if she were in a formal leadership role and had decision-making power about the nature of these events. She says, "Honestamente no me pensado así de eso. Si tuviera un rol donde puedo influenciar el horario entonces sí creo que estuviera más atraída a esos grupos."

Suddenly, I hear quick footsteps behind me. "Mom! Can I have some juice and pan? Hi, Ms. Jasmine!" Melanie shouts as she tugs Flor's shirt. Samuel is next to Melanie, seemingly also wanting a snack.

"Hi, you two! Melanie, today we are going start with you first!" I exclaim.

Every week when I visit their house, Melanie and Samuel take turns in the order they read with me. Usually, Flor gives them a snack before we engage in literacy work. Flor takes out juice boxes from the refrigerator and places them on the kitchen table. Samuel and Melanie quickly grab their juice boxes and sip on them. They grab the two seats between Flor and me and sit. Using one of the dinner knives on the table, Flor cuts two pieces from a large loaf of pan con queso and places them on two plastic plates. Samuel then grabs a plate and heads upstairs to his room. Meanwhile, Melanie starts to eat her piece of bread between sips of grape juice.

As Flor touches her daughter's cheeks and gives her a slight smile, she asks, "Melanie tenemos que escoger un nombre para cambiar el nombre de la escuela. Tiene que ser alguien que es importante e Hispano. ¿Quién crees que debe ser?"

Melanie takes a quick sip of her juice box before she responds, "I think it should be Sonia Sotomayor or Malala. They are very brave! That would be so cool, Mommy!" During the past couple of weeks, Melanie has been reading and watching videos about famous women and their contributions as part of the biography unit in her class. Melanie has previously mentioned that she "admires Sonia because she had to place needles so young and that hurts!" and that "Sonia still went to school and defends people when they don't have much." With regard to Malala, Melanie has disclosed how she "loves how kind she is to people" and "had to fight to go to school because where she lives don't allow it." During this time when the biography unit is being taught in her class, Melanie has asked me if we could read more books about famous women, especially books about Malala Yousafzai and Sonia Sotomayor.

Even though Melanie reads and communicates across English and Spanish varieties at home, she is often positioned as someone "who is a low reader" or "not on grade level" in both languages by various staff members and administrators at her school. I have noticed educators utilize Melanie's standardized language and literacy scores and associated labels to make inferences about her engagement with literacy. Such inferences include Melanie "not reading enough at home," "not having a good literacy environment at home," and "not liking reading books in general." Regardless of these deficit positionings about her literacies, languages, and family's knowledge forms, Melanie consistently asks her mom to select books in Spanish and English and has asked me to bring pictures and videos about these topics covered in class. Despite Melanie's positioning as someone who does not like to read well across languages, she consistently engages in multiple and multimodal practices of meaning-making and interpretation.

After listening to Melanie's suggestions for the new name of the dual language bilingual program, Flor lifts her right index finger and taps her right cheek. She then says, "Bueno, Melanie, creo que la escuela quiere nombrar una persona Hispana que es famosa y ha hecho cosas importante." After Melanie asks her "what is Hispana?" Flor explains that "Hispana es una persona que es descendiente de países Latino Americanos como nosotros. Somos Hispanos o Latinos." Melanie nods and then inquires, "But I thought we were from Guatemala?" I am not surprised by Melanie's questions. Previously, Melanie has expressed her desire to travel to Guatemala: "I would

like to go! I have family there, and I do not know them. Like I have talked with them on the phone, but I want to see them."

Upon hearing Melanie's questions, I notice Flor rolling her eyes and seeming a bit frustrated. Flor then says, "Melanie, sí somos de Guatemala pero también somos Hispanos." Influenced by my inability to remember when I started to use this ethnoracial identification, I tell Flor, "Bueno pues tal vez Melanie necesita más tiempo para reflejar sobre el uso de Hispana. ¿Ud. dijo que comenzó a referirse así cuando llegó acá no?" There is a moment of silence before Flor turns and moves her chair closer to Melanie. She then lifts her right hand to caress Melanie's small hairs at the start of her hair line and says, "Bueno amor con el tiempo creo que vas a ver el uso de Hispano/Latino más como en las escuelas y otros lados. Eso va a ayudar a entender porque personas lo usan." Melanie slowly nods and replies, "Mom, doesn't the person have to have helped people and do good things for them? Like Malala and Sonia?" Melanie's phrase "have to have helped people" reminds me of how activists and community leaders viewed bilingual education during the Civil Rights Era as a form of political education. Melanie's question to Flor seems to be a way in which she pushes adult members, like her mother, to consider other factors beyond name recognition and ethnoracial identification when selecting a person's name to represent a school.

While scratching the right side of her head, Flor affirms Melanie's question: "Bueno eso es un buen punto. Debe ser una persona que también quiere ayudar a las comunidades con bajos recursos. ¿Quieres ir conmigo a la reunión?" Melanie seems a bit taken aback by Flor's question. "Not really. I think those things are kind of boring mom. Samuel and I don't do anything there. We just sit there," Melanie responds, as she gets up from her seat and heads to the living room. Her frank and insightful response makes me giggle.

Indeed, I can imagine why those meetings would be boring for children. Meetings for the parent-teacher group or event planning at the dual language bilingual school are adult-centered. Sometimes, childcare is provided in the room next door to where these meetings are held. However, children who come with their parents/caretakers/family members often sit in the meetings without opportunities to express their opinions about ideas and issues discussed among adults.

As Melanie comes back to the kitchen with her books and sight words, Flor replies, "Bueno la Melanie tiene razón puede ser aburrido para los niños. ¡Si yo me aburro imagínate a ellos!" Sorting out the sight word cards with Melanie on the kitchen table, I start to think about liberatory possibilities that could result if it were an expected norm within family-school relations to have children like Melanie positioned as key decision-makers, with beautiful, complex, and powerful practices, histories, and lived experiences. Once the materials are organized, Melanie refocuses my attention: "Alright, Ms. Jasmine, the cards are ready."

Snack Time

Juliana, a third-grade teacher, types into her laptop, which is connected to a projector. She puts 20 minutes into an online classroom timer. As she is setting up the timer, students are taking out their lunch boxes, which are usually under their seats. Multiple voices and conversations among the children saturate the classroom space. "Alright, everyone, you have 20 minutes for snack. Raise your hand, and Ms. Jasmine will give you today's snack. Today we have grapes! Who wants them?" Juliana shouts.

After classroom teachers take attendance around 8:50 AM, one of the cafeteria staff members walks to each class to leave fruits or vegetables for students to have during their snack time. School administrators and instructional coaches expect snack time to occur within a 15-to-20-

minute time frame. However, teachers have autonomy in choosing a snack time that they think is most appropriate based on their class schedule. For instance, this third-grade class's lunch is during early afternoon, so Juliana schedules snack time for the mid-morning. Today's snack time started at 10:45 A.M.

I walk over to the front of the classroom, where there is a small wooden table next to the door. I grab the grapes the cafeteria member left on the table earlier this morning. I turn around and see hands raised in different ways. Some children have their arms fully extended, while others have their hands raised right at their head level. Students are seated at wooden desks that are between three to four feet apart. I place a bag of grapes beside the students who want one as they continue to talk to their friends. According to the school's safety policy during the COVID-19 pandemic, students are not allowed to walk around their classroom and can only talk to their friends who are seated directly in their vicinity. They are only supposed to take their masks off to eat, but often, they end up eating and talking with their masks off.

After dispersing the bags of grapes to students, I scan the room and see no other hands are raised. However, I notice that Samuel is not talking to anyone, and his head faces downward as he eats his bag of chips. During snack time, he usually likes to interact with other students and eats his meal with a radiant gaze. I quickly place the remaining bag of grapes on the table next to the classroom door and walk over to Samuel. His desk is located on the right backside of the classroom, in front of the small group table. I grab one of the dark blue chairs from the small group table and sit next to Samuel. I notice him briefly look up at me as I push my chair next to his desk.

"¿Cómo estás hoy día, Samuel?" I ask. Samuel stops crunching his chips and takes a sip of his juice box. He turns toward me, responding, "No tan bien. No quiero estar aquí hoy día. Ni quiero hablar con nadie." He then goes back to stare at the ground and continues to sip his juice box. After asking about his health, Samuel explains that he doesn't have "ánimo para continuar a participar en clase." I ask Samuel if he wants to take a walk and refill his water bottle. He immediately nods and requests my permission to throw out his empty juice box and potato chip bag. I tell him, "Claro después de tirar la basura, traiga tu botella de agua y esperarme por la puerta." As Samuel is throwing away his items and zipping up his lunch bag, I walk over to Ms. Juliana, the third-grade teacher, and give her an update on Samuel: "Voy acompañar a Samuel para tomar agua y caminar por la escuela. Tal vez le va a mejorar su ánimo." She deeply sighs, "Yeah, a walk may help because he has been really different today." I thank Ms. Juliana and head over to the front door. I look at Samuel and say, "Ready?" After he gives me a thumbs up, we walk toward the school's main office, where the closest water fountain is located.

Samuel and I are silent as we walk in the hallway. Upon reaching the water fountain, Samuel places his blue water bottle near the head of the fountain. After filling his bottle, Samuel takes a quick sip from his bottle and leans on the white school wall. I then tell him, "Ok, let's walk around and take a breather!" As we make our way toward the other side of the hallway, one first-grader passes us and says, "Hi, Samuel!" Samuel gives the first grader a quick hi and then quickly goes back to look down at the floor as he walks. I stop and ask, "Samuel, lo siento que no estás sintiéndote bien. ¿Hay algo más que podemos hacer para relajarte un poco?" His eyes start to become watery.

"I miss my family. Can we see Melanie?" he asks with a high-pitched voice. I realize that today is a day when Flor is not scheduled to come to the school as an aide. I am compelled to give him a light tap on his shoulder but stop myself due to COVID-19 policies about social distancing. So, I gently nod, saying, "Vamos pues."

Walking over to Melanie's classroom, I am concerned that the second-grade teacher, Ms. Cara, might be annoyed at us for interrupting an activity or lesson. At the same time, I reflect upon

Samuel's rights, specifically, his right to see his sister during the school day, and how school norms, structures, and routines do not recognize Samuel's right to see his sister as a legitimate right that he has as a student. I think about how the uncertainty of Samuel being able to see his sister during the school day connects to the role of a school as a fortress where children, especially those from minoritized groups, are forced to abide by routines, norms, and knowledge forms demanded by adult, institutional actors. Still, though Samuel is expected to act as a submissive member of an institution, he asserts his desire to see Melanie at school.

When Samuel and I arrive at the second-grade classroom, I quickly step inside and walk toward Ms. Cara. As I get closer to Ms. Cara, I realize the classroom is quiet. Students are reading books or drawing and writing on white, lined paper. Ms. Cara is at her desk, looking over her small group conference notes. She looks up at me and says, "Ms. Jasmine. Nice to see you. How can I help you?" After I tell her that Samuel would like to check-in with Melanie, she points out that Samuel is still outside the classroom, by the door. Samuel cautiously walks in as if he were trying to minimize the noise coming from him. As Samuel walks in, Melanie notices and exclaims, "Samuel!" I then realize that Samuel was probably waiting for an adult member to approve his use of the second-grade classroom space.

"Ms. Olson, nos dijo que Melanie y el resto de los estudiantes están leyendo independientemente. Ella está ok con tomando tiempo para chequear con Melanie," I whisper to Samuel.

"Ok. Ms. Jasmine," Samuel whispers back and then quickly walks over to Melanie's desk. Around the room, students either turn their heads or look up from their books and writing pieces to stare at Samuel. Meanwhile, Melanie is waving her head from side to side as she looks inside her picture book about pandas. Like she does at home, Melanie is humming a tune while reading. Once she notices that Samuel is walking over to her, she says, "Yay! Samuel is here!" Samuel grabs a chair from an empty desk and sits next to Melanie. Once Samuel is settled, I sit on a chair next to the classroom door and watch them from my angle.

Melanie places her book on top of her desk and hugs her brother. Their eyes are glistening, and their cheeks are compressing, which makes me think that they are smiling behind their face masks. After Samuel thanks Melanie for the hug, he asks, "What are you doing in class today?" Melanie looks around the classroom walls and starts to tell Samuel what she has done during the school day so far:

> We counted numbers. We used seeds to count, and I counted with Hailey. We also had snack time. Mommy me puso unos cereal bars and strawberries. Yum. Oh then Ms. Olson read to us about habitats. Like there are many of them. We got to choose our own animals and need to know about them. I'm happy I got pandas!

I am unable to hear the rest of Melanie's comments, but I see her pointing to her panda book and then taking out books from her blue bag. She places all the books on top of the desk and says loudly, "Pick for us Samuel!" Samuel picks up each book one by one. He looks at the front and back covers and then skims the pages of each book. He leaves two books on top of Melanie's desk and places the rest of the books back in Melanie's blue bag. Melanie tries to push her seat closer to Samuel as he picks up one of the two books, one is called *Food for Pandas*.

Looking at Samuel read with Melanie, I reflect on our previous conversations where Samuel presented himself as "using English and Spanish a lot every day." Samuel mentioned that he is "more comfortable in using English with teachers and friends." In fact, Samuel received higher scores on standardized English language literacy assessments than those focused on standardized

Spanish literacy. However, various staff members tried to make sense of this apparent discrepancy in assessment scores by referring to the supposed lack of support from his parents in cultivating the literacies demanded at the school. For instance, one teacher claimed that "Samuel is probably lazier at home and does not practice reading at home." And yet, in the second-grade classroom, within bounded expectations and roles placed upon him, Samuel facilitates meaning-making with his sister and shows interest in her educational experiences.

As Samuel reads each page, Melanie often points to picture and text features. She continuously turns to him and makes remarks before he turns each page. I am unable to hear her comments as they continue to read the book about food for pandas. A few minutes later, I hear my name as I look around the rest of the classroom. "Ms. Jasmine, I am ready to go now." I realize it's Samuel, so I give him a thumbs up before getting up from my seat. I look at Ms. Cara, who is piling some worksheets together, and thank her for her support. I hear Melanie say, "Bye, Samuel! Come back again!" Samuel, who is already by the classroom door, waves back at Melanie. Walking out of the classroom, I ask him, "How do you feel?"

Samuel exhales deeply and looks up at me to say, "Better. Much better."

Since Samuel's initial walk to Melanie's classroom during snack time, he has recommended various changes to the practices, routines, and structures of the Mills City Dual Language School. Samuel has demanded that he "and other students be able to go to the bathroom because we want to not have accidents." He tried to support his stance by stating that "each kid is different and our bodies are different." Notably, he critiqued that his school "needs to think more about how we are doing" instead of "just making sure if we learned or not stuff." In such a way, Samuel names the routines and practices that position him and other children as compliant, submissive members. Yet, his comments also contest these norms by exposing how they are harmful, uninformed, and unnecessary customs. Regardless of the attempts from institutional actors, structures, and processes that bound children into a certain order of social existence, they will continue to act in ways that undermine the subjugation of knowledge, groups of people, and forms of communicating within and across schools.

Reflections and Possibilities

The process of writing this portrait illuminated the following actions that resonated with the multiple ways in which Flor, Samuel, and Melanie, as a family, negotiated, resisted, and reimagined their relations with dual language bilingual schooling: connecting, protecting, and learning. These actions relate to what Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) regard as *guiding metaphors and resonances*. Accordingly, the resonances of connecting, protecting, and learning permeate the following reflections about how this portrait of one family's experiences and relations within a dual language bilingual program advances elements of critical consciousness (Palmer et al., 2019) and of answerability in educational research (Patel, 2016) as part of broader efforts for social transformation, self-determination, and liberatory education.

Dominant approaches and definitions for family-school relations are often tied to apolitical, school-based, and decontextualized practices as part of larger efforts for perpetuating the enduring effects of multiple forms of oppression such as White supremacy, coloniality, and racist-capitalism (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Washington, 2021). They are linked to an idealized White identity, its behaviors, practices, and knowledge forms (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). In turn, families' practices, behaviors, and experiences that do not align with these expectations and demands within schooling are relegated as less than and deviant. Although Flor is positioned as passive and

uncaring by the naturalized approaches for family-school relations (Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017) that permeate the dual language bilingual program, she demonstrates her refusal of these norms by protecting her use of time, labor, and energy utilized for maintaining her family's financial wellbeing and stability and leveraging social networks to nurture the learning of many children at the school. Further, her daughter, Melanie, points out that children are not invited to engage in decision-making within family-school initiatives. What is read as not engaging with schooling by dominant discourses and accompanied practices, viewpoints, and actors is often families' refusal to compromise their personhood, relationality, and knowledge traditions for possible recognition and acquisition of tangible and intangible benefits connected to Whiteness. In such a way, Flor, Samuel, and Melanie demonstrate the importance of researchers, educational leaders, and policymakers critically listening (Palmer et al., 2019), or in a broader sense, *critically attuning to manifestations of refusal* by Latinx and racially minoritized families in dual language bilingual programs since their actions represent critical ruptures to hegemonic forms of schooling, learning, and social and material relations.

Much of the routines, practices, and norms in U.S. schools that necessitate contestation and interrogation relate to the carceral nature of schooling. Within this portrait of Flor, Samuel, and Melanie, I referred to the dual language bilingual school as a fortress, which was informed by Henderson's (2007) claims about most literature on family-school relations focusing on fortress schools or come-if-we-call-you schools. Building on various scholarships focused on carceral logics and emancipatory education (e.g., Annamma, 2018; Shedd, 2011; Winn, 2021), I realize that dominant, naturalized forms of family-school relations help establish schools as *carceles*. Within the carceral state, Annamma (2018) and Shedd (2011) argue that institutions, like schools, deploy routines, practices, and ideas that normalize the policing, removal, and punishing of bodies, behaviors, and knowledge forms to maintain social control and, ultimately, uphold White supremacy. Fueled by forms of oppression such as racism, linguicism, classism, and ableism, carceral logics position some members in schools as inherently valuable and others as deviant, thereby enacting harm onto minoritized peoples, especially children.

In relation, the structures, practices, and routines connected to family-dual language bilingual program relations are often covert manifestations of carceral logics. Some examples from the above portrait include Samuel having to ask a teacher for permission to see his sister, Samuel having to ask if he could come into a classroom, and Flor being nervous about consequences if she asserts her opinions about students having more autonomy in their learning and schooling. In fact, these carceral practices were often cemented and perpetuated through Samuel's and Melanie's institutionalized linguistic labels, English Learners. Several scholars (*see* Abril-Gonzalez & Shannon, 2021; Ascenzi-Moreno et al., 2013) have alluded to carceral practices tied to deficit language labeling and learning by referring to students' long-term designation of English Learners as "Lifers" and such students feeling trapped into subpar and oppressive learning experiences. Cabral (2022) defines this racialized interplay between carcerality and educational language learning as *linguistic confinement*, where "schools use seemingly mundane policies and practices surrounding [institutionalized] language designations to educationally trap, sort, and perpetuate historical forms of disposability, dispossession, and exclusion experienced by certain racialized youth" (Cabral, 2022, p. 278). Extending Cabral's (2022) claims about carceral practices experienced by racially minoritized youth with institutional linguistic labels, this study demonstrates how entire families are impacted by the material and social—yet often covert—manifestations of carcerality connected to language designations. As such, educators, administrators, and researchers must contest linguistic confinement and other forms (both soft and hard) of carcerality that permeate dual language bilingual schooling and learning.

At the same time, the carceral nature of schooling also demands us to become attuned to possibilities for better living, caring, and relating that have historically not been supported or cultivated in dual language bilingual programs and U.S. schools at large (Annamma, 2018; Brayboy, 2005; Patel, 2016). Extending claims from various scholars (e.g., Freire, 1970; Nancy, 2007; Palmer et al., 2021) about critically listening to how minoritized peoples name the world to change it (Freire, 1970) and understanding the historical, political lineages of schools and communities, the portrait of Flor, Samuel, and Melanie demonstrates how families are simultaneously reconfiguring relations, practices, and understandings within and beyond their educational settings while they are pointing out the enduring carceral aspects of schooling. During the bounded time and structure of recess, Samuel played futsal as a conduit for sustaining a practice he shared with his father and his membership with a neighborhood group, which allowed him to meet members of other communities. At a Mills City bakery, Flor provided insight and clarified questions regarding curriculum, teaching, and programming to families who were denied access to this knowledge by the school's forms of communication. Further, Samuel and Melanie utilized the structured classroom space and snack time to leverage their dynamic literacies to learn about pandas and take care of each other's wellbeing. The experiences, interactions, and practices of Flor, Melanie, and Samuel exemplify the importance of leveraging forms of survival that already are occurring in dual language bilingual programs as catalysts for abolitionist education (Critical Resistance, 2022; Love, 2019). Therefore, critical attunement also entails a receptiveness to the alternative and liberatory worldmaking practices that have historically been here out of the necessity among groups of people in order to exist (Alvarado, 2023, 2024). Notably, these liberatory possibilities and forms of survival displayed by Flor, Melanie, and Samuel took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, a global crisis that exposed and exacerbated multiple economic, educational, and social inequities. As such, it is crucial to elevate fugitive and liberatory practices within the experiences of Latinx and other multiply-minoritized families during dual language bilingual pandemic schooling as *portals* (Roy, 2021) for expansive and freedom-centered learning and breaking away from "the centuries-long tradition of education [being] the primary sorting mechanism in society" (Patel, 2016, p. 30).

My focus on Flor's, Melanie's, and Samuel's forms of survival, refusal, and reconfiguration of dominant family-school relations, language practices, knowledge forms, and social identifications were heavily informed by portraiture's emphasis on *documenting goodness* (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), and Ewing's and Lawrence-Lightfoot's (2021) efforts toward *writing and researching with love and beauty* as a priority. With regard to love, Ewing and Lawrence-Lightfoot (2021) point out the need to care, respect, and show the humanity of individuals, places, and groups that we write about. They also consider being cognizant and responsive to the social and material consequences that researching and writing have on people, including the writer/researcher. Engaging in portraiture encouraged me to write and research with love due to its emphasis on expressing *goodness*, a quality that refers to the complex whole which "includes people, structures, relationships, ideology, [and] goals… [and] more elusive qualities that can only be discerned through close, vivid descriptions" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983, p. 23). Thus, portraiture helped me describe the perspectives, experiences, and relations of Flor, Samuel, and Melanie as a family and as a collective, instead of presenting knowledge traditions as merely related to specific individuals or prioritizing the experiences of adult members.

Presenting the refusals, reimaginations, and contestations of Flor, Samuel, and Melanie as a collective endeavor was one way in which I tried to resist the dominant practice within the literature on family-school relations and educational research at large and resist separating the knowledge forms, histories, and traditions of families when writing about them. As the stories of Flor, Melanie,

and Samuel illustrate, it is an unmarked norm to separate and stratify family members within participation structures and programming in schools, in this case, in the focal dual language bilingual program (Agbo, 2007; Lomawaima, 1999). Therefore, one starting point for leveraging and honoring families' liberation and refusal practices against social stratification and separation is for researchers, administrators, educators, and policymakers to report about the experiences of families in ways that holistically showcase similar yet divergent trajectories, identifications, and relations among family members. Specifically, they can describe how a family, as a group and as individuals of the group, makes sense of their relations and identifications with various places, entities, groups of people, and forms of communication in broader efforts to respond and resist various matrices of social oppressions.

Part of my commitment to describing Flor's, Melanie's, and Samuel's intricate perspectives and understandings of complex issues they faced in their everyday lives entailed a constant vigilance in making sure I was generating stories that highlighted the subtle, deep, and precise ways in which they resisted and reimagined hegemonic processes and practices instead of creating stories filled with pain and humiliation. In short, I had to constantly reflect, pause, and question whether the narratives I was generating about my participants were only stories of pain and humiliation for the gaze and objectification of higher education or whether these stories invited trajectories for reflection, learning, dialogue, and mobilization that challenge oppressive processes, practices, and structures. One practice that helped align with this intent was to carefully describe how Flor, Melanie, and Samuel made sense of their different and complex relations with multiple categories, places, and groups, and the different vectors of oppression that influenced these identifications. For instance, Flor, Samuel, and Melanie noted their transnational relations and heritage practices by identifying themselves as members of Mills City and having family members in Guatemala. At the same time, Flor discussed how the U.S. positioned them as Hispanos and how this marker is used to label people whose homelands are Latin American nations. In such a way, this family refuted how assertions of difference directly indicate refusal of shared identity (Bukhari, 2010; Patel, 2022).

Indeed, various scholars (e.g., Chávez-Moreno, 2021; Gómez, 2018; Hurtado, 2019) have demonstrated the importance of drawing attention to the varied and unique experiences that have resulted from multiple matrices of oppression (e.g., racialization, economic stratification, heteropatriarchy) among groups of people who share or are bounded by a social category. By highlighting these differences, people can take informed actions to uplift each other's experiences and contest the social and material effects of systemic inequities. Further, they can recognize how previous efforts have promoted bounded identities founded on the subjugation of people from other social groups. Thus, researchers, administrators, and educators in dual language bilingual educational contexts should engage in and form initiatives that encourage their members within the same identity groups (e.g., race, ethnicity, language, class, gender) to learn about their different relations and everyday experiences with matrices of power and oppression. By these stakeholders promoting the interrogation, reflection, and study of shared identities and related systems of oppression, they can begin to counter binary, static orientations to identities, languaging, knowledge forms, and forms of personhood placed upon families.

One example of these rigidities and dualisms is how dimensions of race, ethnicity, and language are often limited to Latinx/White and Spanish/English classifications in dual language bilingual programs (Chaparro, 2019; Muro, 2016; Scanlan & Palmer, 2009). Possible efforts to resist such essentialization could include researchers and school members reporting on the different ways in which families, who share ethnoracial identities (e.g., Latinx, Black/African American, Asian), materially and socially experience asymmetrical power formations; working together to create forums aimed to interrogate and study how various forms of oppression (e.g., White

supremacy, anti-Blackness, racist-capitalism, heteropatriarchy) and/or societal inequities (e.g., gentrification, immigration, workforce discrimination) have led to different experiences, forms of expression, identifications, and access to wealth and resources within groups of people who share social identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, language, class, gender); and building upon mobilization efforts from the aforementioned collective spaces to advance the wellbeing and flourishing of multiply-minoritized groups of people. These efforts would also contest the tendency of presenting the perspectives and experiences of White, European-based groups as an essential basis of comparison and precursor for the intricate reporting and responsiveness to the enduring yet divergent viewpoints, positionings, and trajectories among groups of people racialized as non-White and non-European. Indeed, the aforementioned initiatives will likely lead to moments of discomfort about how one's behaviors, understandings, and relations have perpetuated the minoritization and eradication of groups of people in which we are not members. And yet, these discomforts may lead to nuanced and new recognitions, careful attunements, and commitments toward actions and larger projects centered on self-knowledge, sustained consciousness, self-determination, and freedom for all (Boler, 1999; Palmer et al., 2021).

Relatedly, I often felt much discomfort as I tried to write and research with Lawrence-Lightfoot's and Ewing's (2021) understandings of love and (especially) beauty in mind. In terms of beauty, Lawrence-Lightfoot and Ewing (2021) reported on the insular and opaque modes of communication that dominate higher education and research and asserted that it is crucial to generate knowledge in ways that are precise, subtle, and nuanced so that communities beyond higher education can engage, struggle, and learn with it. Inspired by them and my relationships with families like Flor, Samuel, and Melanie, I wrote about the very complex issues in the portraits while trying not to alienate groups of people who are not explicitly linked to higher education; most importantly, I tried not to devalue the forms of expression from focal participants. This also meant embracing my languaging and those of Flor, Samuel, and Melanie. The result was going back from first person to third person, not italicizing and embedding conversations that were beyond standardized English and Spanish, incorporating the comments from participants as much as it made sense for a section, and interchangeably writing very short and very long sentences. Undoubtedly, this article is longer than the academic publishing industry's expected page range of 20 pages to 30 pages for education research articles, which may disengage some readers. In a way, the length is the outcome of negotiating peer reviewer expectations of a normative empirical paper structure (e.g., introduction, theoretical framework, method, results, and discussion) while not losing the love and beauty of this piece, specifically, the goodness within this portrait: the complex wholeness of a family through careful, vivid, and varied forms of expression. Extending Cioè-Peña's (2021) recommendations about the careful reconciliation between content development and data inclusion to meet word count restrictions from publishing companies, this portrait demonstrates the importance of researchers foregrounding the malleable yet transcendent wholeness of linguistically and multiply-minoritized families' traditions, expressions, and knowledge forms when deciding on the length and structure of a manuscript and attempting to be accountable to families as participants.

In fact, this challenging yet uplifting writing process helped me grapple with my mistakes and imperfections as I reflected and wrote about the experiences of people who have helped me survive during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, I had to recognize my complicity in being part of state governance and punishment as an adult and member of K-12 education and higher education. However, this example is not to say transparency and vulnerability are also not liberating. It definitely felt exhilarating trying to contest this socialized pressure of being a "perfect,

impartial, all-knowing" researcher through this writing by showing that I do not always know what to do or have the right things to say to people.

In fact, I learned more from them than they did from me. Part of this learning was remembering many beautiful and funny moments with my family during K-12 schooling and learning. For these and many other recognitions and understandings, I will always be grateful for Flor, Samuel, and Melanie as well as the rest of the families from the larger research project. I hope to leverage this gratitude to cultivate trajectories of learning, collectivity, and responsiveness to the communities and people I work with and write about.

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