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Accountability Through Vulnerability: Embracing Emotion in Teaching and Research

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Abstract

In this article, I analyze discussions of emotions arising in dual language bilingual education (DLBE) classrooms and relate the process of “embracing discomfort” to identity and power. I utilize data gathered in a single semi-structured interview within a critical ethnography with collaborative elements. In this interview, my collaborators and I named our emotions and utilized diagrams, colors, and multiple forms of expression to explore them. I include myself as a participant analyzing my contributions. In the study, I demonstrate that discussing emotion served a variety of purposes for individuals of differing identities.

Maestra Brenda: I cannot foresee myself saying I can be a good teacher anytime soon, if ever. I know that people will say, “Oh, you’re doing good. You’re doing fine,” but I don’t see it. I don’t see it, and I don’t see myself seeing it for a very long time. And that is daunting.

Rachel: Yeah, that’s hard. You saying that made me think about that, you know, I had a lot of feelings like that when I was teaching. The whole time I was teaching elementary school particularly about like “Should I be doing this? Can I do this well?” At different times I was like, “Yeah, I actually did that well.” Other times, I was like, “I don’t know if I can ever do this.”

Maestra Brenda : I do think that if I was, say, the daughter of a teacher, or maybe if I was White, the problems that I have, I don’t think that they would be as big as I think they are because I would accept them as normal. Because I do think that they are normal. It is normal, I think, that it’s my first year and that I’m not sure that I’m supposed to be doing what I’m doing... But it just means to me that there is a possibility that I can’t do this and then that makes me think like, “Well, if I can’t do this, is it because of why?... Is it because of who I am? Because I don’t have that support at home or from my family? And that becomes very scary. Like that could be like shattering. If I let it kind of come out of a box, it could be like “Oh, yeah. Then maybe society was right. Maybe I can’t do this. Maybe somebody like me can’t do this. And maybe somebody else could.” So, I think this is why, for me, it’s so big. Because if I let it become something that I can’t do, and if my mind kind of goes and starts thinking that I couldn’t do it because I am Mexican, because I did start school later than other people, because of my immigration circumstances and a whole host of other reasons. Then that can be like really... that can be a very big—if not the biggest—breaking point for me.

Rachel: I hear you. It’s good that there’s this balance too right. That this [joy with students] is happening too, right? Well... There’s nothing I can say, but I’m here to listen and validate. I understand where you’re coming from, and I know this is a really difficult journey, and we all navigate it differently, and you’re navigating it from a place—a very different place—than where I navigated from, and I totally respect that. So, like, I don’t have anything I can say other than, like, I see all the beautiful things that you do, and I’m glad that you feel joy with your students too.

Maestra Brenda: Yeah. That’s something I think that, like, whatever happens, no one can take that away. I will forever in my mind—it doesn’t matter how old I am—have the comments that they make. And I feel like at the end of the day, that’s kind of like the reset button. Like “It’s OK. It’s OK.”

(semi-structured interview, December 2019; see Appendices A & B)

As demonstrated in my conversation above with Maestra Brenda, researching, teaching and creating community in dual language bilingual education (DLBE) programs is highly emotional work. Also, identity, particularly racial identity, is central to emotions in these spaces and how we relate to each other. As I have reread and re-listened to this portion of my interview with Maestra Brenda, I have found similar emotions continuously arising: sadness, frustration, guilt, discomfort with my response, and admiration and respect for Maestra Brenda’s perseverance and strength. Analyzing this and other conversations from my research has emphasized how much teachers of Color have taught me about my privilege as a White woman and how much I still need to learn. Also, these conversations have highlighted clear links between emotion, discomfort, and the high stakes involved for teachers of Color.

Based on a set of semi-formal interviews focused on emotions experienced in the classroom conducted with five novice DLBE teachers, I explore how discussions of emotions in my research caused teacher collaborators to embrace discomfort, express their embodied knowledge of (in)justice, and build towards critical consciousness in this article. I also intentionally reflect on my role as a White researcher in this process and the lack of understanding of connections between race and emotion that I brought into this work. My purpose in doing this is multifaceted: first, to demonstrate how “embracing discomfort” and emotion in conversation relates to Latine teachers’ deep knowledge of systemic injustice; second, to highlight how “embracing discomfort” has uneven impacts and consequences for individuals of different identities in DLBE; and third, to highlight that in attempting to conduct collaborative research that is accountable to the teachers I worked with, the least I could do was offer “radical vulnerability,” or an effort to embrace tension, discomfort, and other emotions in return (Nagar, 2014; Palmer et al., 2019). In this paper I ask,

- How did my collaborators embrace discomfort in our shared conversations?
- How did they relate their emotions to their racial and linguistic identities?
- What are my reflections as a white researcher looking back on these conversations and my role in them?
- How can these reflections support me to remain accountable to my community?

I believe it is important to acknowledge that centering my emotions, responses, and reflections in parts of this paper takes the focus and attention away from the incredible experiences, perspectives, and responses of my research collaborators, particularly the four Latine women in the study. I have worked to center their voices and stories in previous publications (Bhansari, 2023a; Bhansari, 2023b), and still do so in this article by foregrounding their contributions to our shared conversations about emotions in the findings section. I include myself, my reflections, my words, and my emotions in the article as a way of working towards accountability to my teacher collaborators, students, and the larger community I am a part of. I also hope this work will spark larger conversations among the many White researchers, teachers, and families participating in DLBE classrooms and communities.

In what follows, I draw on sociocultural theories of emotion to make connections between emotion and identity (Matias, 2016). Then, I link this to the theorization of critical consciousness in DLBE and its four key elements (Palmer et al., 2019).

Emotion, Identity, and Critical Consciousness in DLBE

Rather than conceptualizing emotion as purely individual or related to singular events and reactions, I take up a critical, sociocultural theorization of emotion (Benesch, 2018; Zembylas, 2005). In this view, emotion is conceptualized as deeply linked with power and related to collective experiences with oppression and privilege in the past and present (Zembylas, 2005). For those with direct lived experience of racial and linguistic oppression, emotions can be manifestations of knowledge of this oppression (Jaggar, 1989; Zembylas, 2011). For example, for Latine teachers working in DLBE programs, anger, and frustration can be linked to an awareness of the enduring hegemony of English and Whiteness in these programs (Bhansari, 2023a).

For White individuals, emotions are linked to dominant ways of being or enduring habits that reinforce established hierarchies and White supremacy in school systems (Boler, 1999; Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). Emotions can also be manifestations of privilege and fragility (Matias, 2016). For example, a White teacher might feel nervous and upset when asked to reflect on

their discipline practices for students of Color. This suggests that in attempting to build and enact critical consciousness, which is defined as an explicit attention to the distribution of power and ongoing action and reflection to shift inequities, attention to emotions and their links with identity are necessary for both the community members of Color and the White individuals involved (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017).

Recent research in DLBE classroom contexts has highlighted enduring inequities and challenging contexts that negatively impact racially and linguistically marginalized students and families (Flores, 2016; Palmer, 2010). In response to this reality, research has called for the implementation of critical consciousness as a new “fourth pillar” in DLBE (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017; Palmer et al., 2019). In their conceptualization of the four key elements of critical consciousness, Palmer et al., (2019) name “embracing discomfort” as one element essential to the formation and enactment of this consciousness. Palmer et al. (2019) suggest that discomfort is present in many aspects of the everyday work in DLBE, and often the burden of shouldering discomfort is placed upon racially and linguistically marginalized students and families. Studies of the experiences of teachers of Color in DLBE indicate that Latine teachers are exploited for their linguistic skills, overworked, and marginalized in schools (Amanti, 2019; Amos, 2016).

Rather than expecting teachers of Color to do all of this work, Palmer et al., (2019) argue that discomfort must be embraced by all—particularly those with social privilege such as White parents and administrators—in order to shift normative emotional habits and White supremacist cultures. Furthermore, they assert embracing discomfort in shared work and discussion can lead to increased critical consciousness and solidarity between privileged and marginalized communities in DLBE. Research focused on emotion and its links to social justice work suggest that discomfort can be productive, particularly for White individuals (Boler, 1999). Less research considers what such discomfort looks like or feels like in practice and how it may manifest differently for individuals of varying racial and linguistic identities in shared interactions. Thus, here, I consider broader links between discomfort and other emotions described by the novice teachers in my study. Also, I analyze ways in which our identities (including mine as a White researcher) shaped this discomfort in our conversations.

In what follows, I describe the methodology utilized in this research, and its connection to my overall purpose in this paper.

Methodology

Humanizing Research & Radical Vulnerability

As part of the enactment of critical consciousness, Cervantes-Soon et al. (2017) called for engagement in “humanizing research” (p. 404) which they define as research that centers on relationships of care and respect and collaborates with stakeholders and communities for change. Humanizing research also links to calls for researchers to take up a “teacher solidarity” stance or an explicit choice to align with teachers of Color and understand the complex realities in which they are situated (Philip et al., 2016). It is important to note that much of the foundational work in humanizing methodologies was completed by researchers of Color with communities of Color. In endeavoring to engage in humanizing research as a White woman working with BIPOC teachers, I recognize my limited capacity to understand what is or feels humanizing to racially minoritized folx. Thus, I consider my research as drawing upon “humanizing” methods, but whether or not it was actually humanizing or it felt humanizing can only be judged by the collaborators.

If humanizing research in DLBE is meant to center caring relationships based on mutual trust, it is essential for the researcher to consider their role in these relationships, including the identity and positionalities from which they are listening to collaborators' emotions and experiences (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017; Chaparro, 2020). This requires attention to researcher emotion and efforts to "embrace discomfort" as a means for creating knowledge of social inequities. But what does "embracing discomfort" actually look like for researchers, particularly White researchers with social privilege, entering DLBE spaces? And how does this process of "embracing discomfort" intertwine with efforts to create solidarity with communities of Color and collaborate for change? To explore these questions, this study draws upon "radical vulnerability," which Nagar (2014) defines as a purposeful unveiling of messy emotions including love, joy, discomfort, and frustration on the part of the researcher in the process of research. Building on the understanding that research collaborators are already expressing such vulnerability, Nagar (2014) suggests that "radical vulnerability" from the researcher is needed for any type of solidarity to develop.

Radical vulnerability builds on an acknowledgement of researcher privilege and positionality to add an explicit display of researcher emotion and of engagement with messiness, mistakes, love, and complex emotions produced in the research processes. Nagar (2014) states,

If the politics of alliance... require us to open ourselves to being interrogated and assessed by those to whom we must be accountable, then such politics are also about acknowledging, recognizing, and sharing our most tender and fragile moments, our memories and mistakes in moments of translation, in moments of love. (p. 23)

Thus, in this paper, in order to work towards my own accountability to my teacher collaborators and others whom I work with and love, I invite interrogation of my role in the conversations I describe and embrace my own related emotions. I in no way mean for this to be a model of what radical vulnerability could (or should) look like; rather, I hope it will start conversations about bringing radical vulnerability into research in DLBE classrooms and schools, particularly for White researchers, families, and students working towards solidarity with communities of Color.

The Study

This paper arises from a larger critical ethnographic study with collaborative elements (Madison, 2005). Completed in the school year 2019-2020, this research was centered on the everyday experiences of my teacher collaborators as first-year teachers in DLBE, and the emergence of critical consciousness in their work (Bhansari, 2023b). The overall study was intentionally designed to foster and build upon "situated solidarity" (Nagar, 2014, p. 5) or solidarity formed through shared critiques of and experiences within a challenging system, in this case DLBE. This type of stance has also been described as "acompañamiento" in research or the act of standing alongside a community and collectively working towards change (Heiman & Nuñez-Janes, 2021). Opportunities were provided for teachers to contribute to the research and act as collaborators; the teachers were consulted prior to the start of the study regarding methods, the teachers and I regularly met to share our thoughts regarding observations and themes, and depending on interest and capacity teachers were involved in the dissemination of research (Santiago González & Bhansari, 2022).

Context

I first met and engaged with the teacher collaborators while they were enrolled in a Teacher Education Program (TEP) at a university in the Pacific Northwest. I was a doctoral student and was involved in teaching and coaching across all quarters of the TEP. Consequently, I forged my relationship with these teachers from a position of power and had the opportunity to engage with them in deep conversations regarding race, language, equity, and school systems for over a year. I invited the teachers to collaborate with me in this research following their graduation from the TEP in June of 2019. I utilized invitational recruitment, and collaborators were all those who wished to participate in the study including four Latine teachers and one White teacher (See Table 1).

Table 1
Research collaborators

Collaborator Name	Racial Identity	Linguistic Identity	Grade Taught
Melissa	Latine	Grew up with both Spanish and English	2nd
June	White	Spoke English at home and learned Spanish in Middle School	Kindergarten
Silvia	Latine	Grew up with both Spanish and English	4th
Brenda	Latine	Learned Spanish first and English in kindergarten	4th
Yaritzi	Latine	Grew up with both Spanish and English	4th
Rachel	White	Spoke English at home and learned Spanish in Middle School	Previously taught kindergarten, 1, 2, & 3

The teachers worked in five different elementary schools across two school districts. Because their DLBE programs and schools are not the focus of this paper, I omit a separate description of each. It is important to mention that the context of DLBE in Washington state is complex; although DLBE has recently been lauded and championed by the State Superintendent of Instruction, the purpose and impact of the program has been questioned (Bhansari, 2020). In particular, research shows that DLBE in Washington is related to “interest convergence” between White residents and residents of Color, and a deficit-oriented view of multilingual students is embedded in various policies and related documents (Bhansari, 2020).

Interview Methods

This particular article is based on a set of semi-structured interviews conducted in late December of 2019 and January of 2020. This was the second round of recorded interviews completed with the teacher collaborators and was centered on the emotions we experienced as teachers in the classroom. I designed an interview protocol that allowed for multimodality of expression and mutual vulnerability in our discussion (see Appendix A). Acknowledging that many emotions overlap, intersect, and co-exist in complex ways, I chose a Venn diagram as a potential representation tool for this activity and invited each teacher collaborator to represent three salient emotions they felt as first year teachers with words, colors, and images.

I collected these diagrams, and they are displayed in Appendix B. Because I wanted to make interviews responsive to collaborator choice, one collaborator, June, chose not to create a diagram. I also completed a diagram during each interview and shared my responses with my collaborators. I did this for multiple reasons, primarily because I recognized I was asking the teachers to be incredibly vulnerable, and I needed to display this vulnerability in return (Annamma, 2016). Sharing my diagram first, while also limiting the time I spoke during each interview allowed me to start a conversation and open my story up for teachers' comments and questions. Also, it eliminated the possibility that the teachers would feel I was pre-judging their products by watching them draw and allowed them to take whatever amount of time they needed to finish (Beneke, 2021). Following the completion of the diagrams, I asked relevant follow-up questions, made connections to my identities, and encouraged collaborators to make connections to their identities. In addition to this interview, data from extensive participant observation was utilized to add details to the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2013).

Data Analysis

The audio recordings of the interviews yielded approximately eight hours of audio, which was transcribed and shared with the teacher collaborators via Google Docs. Driven by co-identified salient themes and multiple rounds of coding, the initial analysis of these transcriptions was part of the holistic analysis of the entire data set. Prior to composing this article, I re-read each transcript and each Venn diagram multiple times. After the initial readings, I coded thematically based on the research questions using the following themes: connections to identity, embracing discomfort, warmth, joy, and love. I also purposefully reflected on all of the portions of the transcript where I spoke, which I had not previously analyzed. Following the thematic coding, I re-read the excerpts and wrote a memo regarding my observations. Finally, I composed the Findings section of this paper.

Findings

In this section, I present the overall findings of this study based on the research questions:

- How did my collaborators embrace discomfort in our shared conversations?
- How did they relate their emotions to their racial and linguistic identities?
- What are my reflections as a white researcher looking back on these conversations and my role in them?
- How can these reflections support me to remain accountable to my community?

In the first part of the findings, I focus on the contributions of my teacher collaborators and highlight the many emotions they shared in our conversations. Then, I underline the connections they made between the emotions they expressed and their identities. I highlight the ways in which expressing these emotions had higher stakes for the Latine teachers in the study. Also, for the Latine teachers, awareness of the connections between hope, love, their identities, and histories supported their ongoing strength and perseverance within racist systems. Finally, I include an analysis of my own contributions to these conversations, including my emotional reactions and the realizations of ways I brought Whiteness into our conversations.

Emotions and Embracing Discomfort

Across my conversations with my collaborators, a range of emotions were represented and discussed. All of my collaborators expressed frustration, and on their Venn diagrams, both Silvia and Yaritzi identified frustration as a key emotion (see Appendix B). The teachers discussed this frustration in relation to their work in the classroom. Yaritzi shared,

I get frustrated whenever I know [the students] can do something but they choose not to listen, not to pay attention... like not staying quiet when I need it to be quiet because that's my moment of thinking... I feel frustration because I feel like we should already have everything down. (semi-structured interview, December 2019)

For Yaritzi, frustration was related to the gap she perceived between what she envisioned for her classroom and her current reality. Silvia also connected to this, stating, "I'll feel frustrated sometimes but I keep it in. I don't take it out on my kids, but I just feel like I get frustrated with myself which makes it hard for me" (semi-structured interview, December 2019). Thus, Silvia's frustration was related to her perception of her performance as a teacher, and, as she stated, was an emotion she felt she needed to manage while teaching because of its potential impact on the students.

Frustration also related to what Melissa and June named as worry. In our conversation, Melissa stated, "I always feel worried. Let's face it. I want to make at least a year's growth, you know? I don't know, like how am I going to get from point A to point B?" (semi-structured interview, January 2020). In this conversation, Melissa acknowledged the everyday work of teaching caused her to feel concern, connected with both her perception of her own performance and her hopes for her students. June also expressed this worry stating, "It's just a constant feeling... I do really get scared that I'm gonna set this group of students up for less success than I will set future groups of students up" (semi-structured interview, January 2020). June indicated her fear that she will negatively impact her students because of her inexperience as a first-year teacher. Silvia also pointed to this emotion in her Venn diagram, labeling the bottom right circle as "new, inexperienced and young" (see Appendix B). Sharing these emotions with me, as their former instructor and coach, required the teachers to embrace discomfort and vulnerability associated with their own struggles and potential failures.

Emerging through our everyday work as teachers, my teacher collaborators embraced joy, love, and warmth in addition to the above emotions. In their Venn diagrams, they represented this as a variety of feelings: "daily smiles," "amused/surprised," "creative," "lightness," "warmth/love," "pleasantness," "happiness," and "hopeful"; and often used colors like yellow, blue, and green (see Appendix B). For all the teachers, these emotions were related to relationships with students,

families and self-expression in the classroom. For example, Brenda shared that her relationships with parents and students brought her warmth and joy:

I think the warmth that I get is mostly from certain [Latine] parents because sometimes they handwrite me notes and it's so cute or like by kids because they also handwrite me notes and they're all misspelled, and they're also cute. (semi-structured interview, December 2019)

This indicates how relationships with students and families brought feelings of love into the classroom. Furthermore, it shows how identity is related to the warmth and joy as Brenda received from the gifts from Latine parents.

The experiences of love, joy, and warmth were also related to teachers' self-expression, values, cultures, and identities, particularly for the Latine teachers. Yaritzi described this connection as related to values imbued by her parents:

I'm always in the state of like everything happens for a reason and that's where pleasantness comes from and that's how I grew up was just like enjoy the things that you have now... My parents always taught me like "Oh, like make sure you're always paying attention and you're always listening to others and opening up to them." (semi-structured interview, December 2019)

For Yaritzi, expressing this pleasantness was a link to her learning as a child and ways of being in the world. Similarly, Melissa described her feelings of amusement in the classroom as linked to her familial culture:

The feelings of amusement and surprise connect to my identity of wanting to be humorous. My dad is really humorous, and I've always admired that in him and like "Oh, I want to be able to tell jokes and carry a story and just have people enthralled in what I'm saying." And then, like, that aspect of creativeness, like, I have really always valued, like, resourcefulness and thriftiness, and so I guess that's where that stems from. So, a lot of these relate to my values which are part of my identity. (semi-structured interview, January 2020)

Thus, these positive feelings experienced in teaching were linked to Melissa's cultural values and manifested when she was able to express how she wanted to be as a teacher.

Not only did my teacher collaborators describe feeling love and joy through these relationships but also being uplifted and offered purpose in their work. Silvia shared that her relationship with her students supported her when she felt frustration and fear:

I put hopeful because, like, when the frustration is happening, like, literally this morning, I was like "Oh, like I'm gonna see my kids so..." Sometimes I feel like I start thinking too much about, like, "this is my job and I have to do this, and I have to do that" and then it's just only when I start talking about my kiddos—like one on one or, like, as a class—I'm like, "Oh, this is this is my job. This is what I'm supposed to do." (semi-structured interview, December 2019)

In this quote, Silvia relates frustration at the bureaucratic requirements of teaching, while indicating the joy and hope that emerges when she is able to engage with her real job: being with students. In this statement, Silvia embraced the discomfort she experienced with hegemonic ideals of the

purpose of her job and expressed her critical awareness of what really mattered. Brenda reiterated this sentiment, stating,

These little moments, although they're not many, I feel like because they're so important they can be few but be more significant than a majority of bad things. I feel like things like that really ground me and help me think that, well, the most important part of teaching I think is the aspect of human connection, more so than anything. (semi-structured interview, December 2019)

Brenda embraced discomfort here by honestly sharing that her joyful moments are “not many” and that she experienced a “majority of bad things.” Although Brenda was inundated by doubt, exhaustion, and frustration, she still found meaning in her work and joy in her everyday interactions with students. This indicates her inner strength, commitment to her students, and the importance of expressing joy and love in DLBE teaching.

Connections to Identity: “What if I Can’t Do This?”

In the next section, I build upon the description of emotions that were embraced in our conversations to further address the question: *How did my collaborators relate their emotions to their racial and linguistic identities?* In the discussions of their emotions, teachers made specific connections to their identities and located their identities in systems of power. For the Latine teachers, this meant drawing connections between emotional knowledge, cultural knowledge, and navigational knowledge of the system. Also, this critical awareness supported their articulation of how the hope and perseverance they had cultivated throughout their lives would enable them to continue teaching within problematic systems. For June and me, the White teacher, connections to identity allowed us to note privilege and critically question our work in the classroom. Because emotions of self-doubt were intertwined with systemic racism and its impacts on teachers’ lives, expressing discomfort had much higher stakes for the Latine teachers and demonstrated their deep strength and perseverance.

Connections to Identity for Latine Teachers

As we discussed the links between emotions and experiences in the classroom, Latine teachers related feelings of frustration and worry about the ways in which they were positioned in the system as DLBE teachers and, at times, were constrained by policies and existing school cultures. Brenda described this, stating,

This constant feeling of being tired and also a lot of frustration because there are a lot of challenges... like the structure dictates that you have to do all of these things but then so you do them, but then you also plan for the things that you actually do in your classroom, and then it’s just like it’s such a hodgepodge of things that it’s just really frustrating. (semi-structured interview, December 2019)

As Brenda describes, “the structure dictates” in the White supremacist school system, meaning she was required to do things in normative ways. At the same time, Brenda had to plan and carry out what she “actually” did (i.e., moments of self-expression and freedom). Thus, her emotions of

exhaustion and frustration were directly related to her identity as a Latine woman doing double the work to satisfy systemic requirements and push against norms in a White school system.

As a novice teacher, Yaritzi also realized that she was positioned in certain ways by the system and that her principal had taken advantage of her newness to place her into a challenging role, serving 30+ students in a fifth grade DLBE classroom. Besides the large number of students, Yaritzi was expected to serve any new students, whether or not they spoke Spanish or had been in DLBE before. As Yaritzi reflected on her frustration, we had the following conversation:

Yaritzi: If I could go back, I wish I would have stood up a little bit more about having 30 kids, and I would have said no. But I didn't. But next time, I know that I can say no.

Rachel: Oh, so you could've?

Yaritzi: I could have said no. I was told, like, you can accept or you cannot, it's fine. But I was so afraid that if I didn't that I would just be looked down on or that I would lose my job but now I'm like, "No, I have a contract." But now I'm more aware of it and I am allowed to say no whenever we have a new student coming, I'm just like no I'm not okay with that. (semi-structured interview, December 2019)

Here, Yaritzi discussed the challenges of saying 'no' from her position as a new teacher of Color speaking to the principal. She stated she was afraid she would be "looked down on," or that her choice not to take up this role would be related to her work ethic or value as a person. Processing her frustration helped her to realize she was being placed in an unfair position as a novice DLBE teacher with an overloaded classroom including students learning Spanish for the first time in fifth grade, and she could advocate for herself and her students.

Silvia experienced frustration due to being judged as a teacher for these tasks the "structure dictates." Silvia's frustration was linked to her experience with classroom observations, and the consequences of having experienced a negative evaluation at the beginning of her teaching year. She said,

I want to do things right, but I don't know how... I feel this is right, but then, for example, my principal told me, like, "Oh, that was like one thing that I saw that concerned me" and I was like "Well, I didn't think it was that big of a deal." But I imagine as you get more experience you start to realize things that are, and things aren't, like, a big deal? But this also came from that, that structural side of like do you expect teachers to be one way? You can have all the best intentions in the world, but if you don't do things a certain way, like, then you're not... I don't know. Sometimes I was like am I a sucky teacher or what? (semi-structured interview, December 2019)

In this quote, Silvia acknowledged the challenge of responding to criticism from her principal as a new teacher and of grappling with existent expectations of how teachers "should" teach. As Silvia asks, "do you expect teachers to be one way?" She questions normative expectations typically based on White, female elementary teachers. Further, Silvia embraced discomfort in sharing that this caused her to question herself, stating, "Am I a sucky teacher or what?" This highlights that these imposed ideals of what teachers should do and be were impacting her deeply.

In connection to this self-questioning, both Melissa and Brenda wrote on their Venn diagrams that they experienced "daily doubt," indicating they were challenged by self-questioning

every single day (see Appendix B). For example, Brenda shared that she felt her job “has consumed [her] life in a way,” resulting in her “no longer having time for [her] family.” For her, this was deeply related to doubt; she asked,

I always come back to thinking, is it consuming my life because it’s such a worthwhile thing? And it’s such a great thing that I’m doing? Or is it consuming my life because I’m not cut out for this?... That’s what I think about almost every day. (semi-structured interview, December 2019)

This indicates that, for Brenda, being a DLBE teacher became the center of her world and took up the vast majority of her time and energy. At the same time, she expressed doubt that this was the case because it was so “worthwhile,” wondering if it was because she was “not cut out for it.” This speaks to the way she grappled with internalized racism and messages regarding her worth as a racially and linguistically minoritized individual. In our further conversation, Brenda connected this to her self-understanding as a Latine woman. She stated,

This is not the path that society was like “this is one that you can take.” This is one that I decided to take against so many odds. And I know that. And I think that because I know that, that also is something that makes me have a strong personality because I cannot afford to not be assertive. And this is just a personality that has been designed through all the experiences that I’ve had, many if not most of which have not been to my advantage. (semi-structured interview, December 2019)

In this quote, Brenda names her constant fight to exist in a role that a White supremacist society does not want her to have. She also calls on her critical consciousness of this as a source of strength, stating that “because [she knows] that... that makes [her] have a strong personality.” This speaks to her determination to continue despite all of these challenges.

For all four Latine teachers in this study, connecting emotions like frustration, doubt, and love with identity had deeper implications for their roles and purposes as teachers, as well as their ability to navigate unjust systems. For example, Melissa related her feelings of “creativity” and “amused/surprised,” to her education and purpose as a DLBE teacher. She stated,

Both of these connect to my desire to want my thinking to be pushed. Every time someone really makes me think, I really appreciate that... We were talking about creating buy-in for bilingual education; sometimes, it’s like helping the students to see the benefits that come along with being bilingual... And then, I think it was Brenda that said like, she loved all of those things that can come with a bilingual education. But she also likes to frame it around, like, the benefits you can give to other people when you’re bilingual... You’re a peace builder. And then, the creativity also relates to—like me wanting to see dual language thrive—and why do I want it to thrive? Because I see all the love that Spanish can carry. (semi-structured interview, January 2020)

For Melissa, DLBE was related to “all the love that Spanish can carry,” because of her culture, personal experiences, and identity. She derived the positive emotions of feeling “creative” in her role as a teacher because of her ability to also serve as an advocate for her language and community.

For Brenda and Silvia, feelings of hope and possibility were also directly related to their racial and linguistic identities, as well as their experiences with oppression and marginalization. Silvia stated,

My identity as a Brown woman—like as a Latinx woman—relates a lot to both frustration and the feeling of being hopeful. Because I feel like I’ve always had these two my whole life—like frustrated—because I only had this much, hopeful because I want to get to there. Which is why, sometimes, I’m like “I feel defeated,” but I feel like because of the things that I’ve had to do to be the first person in my family to actually have a career, I’m like, “Well, I like I have to fight the status quo. I’ve done it before, I can do it again.” So, these go hand-in-hand for me. (semi-structured interview, December 2019)

For Silvia, frustration and hope “go hand-in-hand” because she knows she has experienced—and will continue to experience—oppression, yet she has the capacity to fight. This indicates Silvia’s critical awareness of her own power and potential to change the system through her work as a DLBE teacher.

Similarly to Silvia, Brenda connected daily doubt to hope and perseverance that she has held her whole life:

Even though I do feel every day that like, “Oh, maybe I can’t do it” part of me, I hope that [other] part of me will always be there saying, “Yeah, I can. Just you wait.” Because I can be very determined. And I am grateful for that because I think that if I wasn’t, I think I would have like rolled up into a ball and died already. But it’s kind of like the fear of not being able to do something also really motivates me more to be like “Oh, yes I can!” And I think that is strongly, strongly linked to my identity as a Mexican female. Cause I can’t think of anything that has really fueled that drive in me more than having been a non-documented female from Mexico in the US who started school not even being able to ask where the bathroom was—to be here. I think that if I didn’t have all those experiences, I don’t think I would have made it this far. So even though this is huge and it’s something I struggle with, I do think that the hardships, in a way, will mold themselves into something that I can use to help me. (semi-structured interview, December 2019)

In this statement Brenda embraces discomfort and vulnerability, highlighting the fact that negative experiences in her life have been so intense that she was unsure she would survive. At the same time, she embraces her identity, history and ability to persevere, stating, “I can’t think of anything that has really fueled my drive in me more than having been a non-documented female from Mexico in the US.” Brenda’s critical consciousness of what it has taken for her to become a teacher gives her hope that what is a “huge” challenge will still become a part of her strength. This demonstrates the power of connecting emotion to identity for teachers of Color as well as the high stakes involved in discussing these emotions; in this case, we were literally discussing Brenda’s survival.

Connections to Identity for White Teachers

In our conversations, June and I also made specific connections to our racial identities, particularly how those identities intersected with power. It’s important to acknowledge these connections had different meanings and impacts for June and me, as White teachers, than for Silvia,

Yaritzi, Brenda, and Melissa as Latine teachers. For example, when I discussed how my teaching emotions were connected to my identities, I repeatedly found myself making links between my privileged racial identity and my emotions in school. For example, in my conversation with Melissa, I stated,

So, I think warmth and love, it does come from values that I have. Valuing kindness, love, valuing connection. I think it also comes from me personally being a White woman... feeling pretty happy every time I was in school because I felt like it was a place I belonged. So, for me, returning to school still feels like a happy place. (semi-structured interview, January 2020)

In this statement, I acknowledged my racial privilege in order to go beyond a connection between emotions and “personal values,” linking emotions to experiences I have had because of the way I am positioned in the world.

For both June and I, this was important because it supported us to embrace discomfort and question our actions as White teachers in DLBE. In our conversation, June stated,

[Worry] very much directly relates to my positionality as a monolingually raised English speaker. I didn’t quite realize how easy it is to *not* speak in Spanish. I feel deeply concerned that I’ve set a precedent with a lot of my students who speak Spanish that they seem to want to only communicate with me in English, even if I’m communicating to them in Spanish. And I worry in some ways that my own positionality as an English speaker has influenced that... And so, it’s a very intense noting of the power that I have. And how I’m using it and how I’m also sometimes choosing to ignore it... (semi-structured interview, January 2020)

June was a self-contained DLBE kindergarten teacher who was asked to teach 50% of the day in Spanish and 50% in English to her group of multilingual students. Thus, June linked her worry to her identity as a White teacher who learned Spanish as an additional language in school and her fear that she was not bringing enough Spanish to the classroom. She embraces discomfort in noting that for her, it is “easy to *not* speak in Spanish.” She notes, “the power that [she has]” in her role as a DLBE teacher and the ways in which she is unconsciously and consciously bringing English hegemony into the classroom. This discomfort and questioning is significant because June acknowledged that she sometimes “uses” her power and sometimes “ignores it,” prompting her to consider how she could become more critically aware of her language use.

It is extremely important to note that while it was uncomfortable for June and I to discuss our racial privilege and how it shaped our teaching, the stakes were much lower. We did not have to contend with deep self-doubt linked to internalized racism or concern for our own safety or survival.

Researcher Reflections

In this section of the findings, I ask myself, “What are my reflections as a researcher looking back on these conversations and my role in them? How can these reflections support me to remain accountable to my community?” As I contemplated these questions, particularly the second one, I needed to confront the fact that “my community” has changed. Although I maintain relationships with these teacher collaborators, I have graduated and moved on to work at a new institution. In many ways, this article benefits me more as a junior faculty member in a tenure-track

position than it may benefit my collaborators. So, I wonder, “What does it mean to remain accountable to this group of teachers now that I have graduated, moved to a new community, and chosen an academic career?”

Perhaps, accountability means that I continue reflecting, that I continue learning from our experiences, and that I share these stories for the purpose of creating change. I think particularly as a White researcher, it could mean I should be vulnerable enough to highlight my own failures, mistakes, and tensions. In other words, I should risk losing the power that comes from looking like “an expert,” in research. In fact, considering the vulnerability the Latine teachers embraced in sharing their emotions and experiences with me, I think it is the least I can do in return. In that spirit of working towards “radical vulnerability,” I would like to share some observations I made as I re-read and analyzed this data with my own contributions in mind (Nagar, 2014).

In our conversations, I repeatedly expressed challenging emotions, some that still make me feel shame, sadness, and discomfort. I noticed I shared these emotions in different ways with different collaborators and that my expressions were built on what I knew about them, how we connected, and our previous conversations. This stood out to me because I did not previously consider how my desire to build rapport with my collaborators might influence my self-expression. For example, I described my frustration in different ways to Yaritzi and Silvia. With Yaritzi, I shared,

I think since I’m no longer in the elementary school classroom I don’t feel frustration as much, oddly I think I felt frustration more when I was working with kids and I’d be like “Why aren’t you doing that thing, I just want you to do it!” But, like, now I feel like it’s slightly different. It’s more like tension or fear, and that often comes up for me when there might be confrontation in class. (semi-structured interview, December 2019)

Here, I framed my frustration as an elementary school teacher in relation to student behavior, which connected with Yaritzi’s statement about being frustrated when “[she knows] they can do something, but they choose not to.” Also, I did not pause to consider how both this frustration with students and my other frustration with “confrontation” are related to Whiteness and my work as a White teacher. With Silvia, I described my frustration in the following:

I think when I’m teaching adults, if I’m honest, like I feel [frustrated]... because adults are more formed as people, they’re bringing these experiences and opinions, and so I think it’s harder than working with kids... Sometimes hearing opinions that people have can be really frustrating or like thoughts that people are bringing to the table. (semi-structured interview, December 2019)

This statement reflected my knowledge of Silvia; as a young woman in our TEP program, she was frequently frustrated by comments she knew were racist or informed by White supremacy. I framed my frustration as similar to hers, despite the fact I bring a different lens to our classroom conversations as a White teacher educator. I should have acknowledged the frustration Silvia experienced in our TEP could have been caused by me.

Observing the differences between these two conversations, I noted that although it’s certainly possible that I feel—and felt—frustration in these multiple ways, I should also pay attention to the ways in which I communicate differently with various collaborators. My desire to be accepted and invited into conversation by these amazing teachers influenced ways that I chose to

relate with them and describe my own feelings. I feel tension and worry about this realization, and I think it can inform my future choices as a researcher.

Also, as I demonstrated above, I failed at times to make connections to my White racial identity, assuming my emotions might be similar to my collaborators' emotions despite our distinct positionalities. Returning to the conversation I shared with Brenda (quoted at the beginning of this article), I see I was not prepared to respond to her expression of doubt as a teacher of Color. I tried to connect her experience to my own, stating, "I had a lot of feelings like that when I was teaching. The whole time I was teaching elementary school particularly about like should I be doing this? Can I do this well?" Yet, Brenda powerfully taught me my experience was distinct from hers as a woman of Color:

I do think that if I was, say, the daughter of a teacher, or maybe if I was White, the problems that I have, I don't think that they would be as big as I think they are because I would accept them as normal. Because I do think that they are normal. It is normal, I think, that it's my first year and that I'm not sure that I'm supposed to be doing what I'm doing... But it just means to me that there is a possibility that I can't do this and then that makes me think like, "Well, if I can't do this, is it because of why?... Is it because of who I am?" (semi-structured interview, December 2019)

Prior to this conversation, I had not thought about the ways in which racism and linguicism create such high stakes for novice multilingual teachers of Color who naturally make mistakes and experience doubt as all teachers do. Brenda was absolutely correct in that, for me, the possibility of failure was easier to accept as a "normal" part of being a new teacher. Whereas for her, she worried about the possibility of failure being linked to her identity as a Mexican woman and how others would use her performance to justify racist assumptions and actions. My lack of previous consideration of this reality is reflected in my response: "There's nothing I can say, but I'm here to listen and validate. I understand where you're coming from, and I know this is a really difficult journey, and we all navigate it differently." This causes me to wonder: how could a teacher educator of Color have supported Brenda differently in this moment? I am reminded my identity always matters in my responses and relationships and will continue to have impacts on my solidarity with teachers.

Discussion

This article has three purposes: first, to demonstrate the importance of including and explicitly discussing teachers' emotions in humanizing research in DLBE (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017); second, to underscore the differing implications and manifestations "embracing discomfort" can have, particularly in connection with teachers' racial identities; and third, to explore the possibility of sharing the researcher's emotions while also centering identity in order to work towards accountability (Nagar, 2014). I argue that processing emotion, particularly when linked to discussions of identity and power, has multiple purposes related to critical consciousness in DLBE (Palmer et al., 2019). Emotions are a key form of knowledge that can support novice teachers of Color to identify, make sense of, and navigate injustice in their environments (Bhansari, 2023a).

In the first part of the Findings section, my teacher collaborators and I uncovered many emotions emergent in the everyday work of teaching. These emotions were complex, defied singular labels, and were felt deeply in the body during teaching (Benesch, 2018; Jaggar, 1989). For

example, several Latine collaborators described their feelings of deep exhaustion: “feeling tired all the time” as Brenda wrote or “overwhelmed” as Melissa described. This exhaustion and overwhelm linked to emotional knowledge of the marginalization they experienced in the system as new teachers and as teachers of Color (Jaggar, 1989; Winograd, 2009). For example, Brenda stated that her feelings of tiredness were related to what “the structure dictates,” acknowledging that she did not always feel free to make her own choices about what was best in her classroom. Connecting this further to identity and personal history, Silvia acknowledged that she had felt this way her “whole life,” always needing to fight the “status quo.” This indicates the deep connection between embodied experience, emotion, knowledge of injustice, and potential avenues for navigating this injustice for teachers of Color (Benesch, 2020; Winograd, 2009).

My Latine teacher collaborators had to “embrace discomfort” on a daily basis as they managed self-doubt and frustration in their work (Palmer et al., 2019). As Brenda powerfully pointed out, this discomfort was amplified because of her awareness that the judgment of her work by others would always be related to her racial and linguistic identities. Furthermore, discomfort constantly existed for the Latine teachers having to follow “what the structure dictates” and grappling with expectations that teachers should “be one way,” or being like White, female teachers in their work. This demonstrates how much strength and perseverance these Latine teachers drew upon every day to continue their jobs. This has many implications for efforts to support and retain teachers of Color in DLBE, as discussed in the final section.

For June and me, embracing discomfort was much more temporary; this was something we could choose to do in dialogue or reflection and not do at other times. June embraced discomfort as a White woman as she contemplated her role in language hegemony in DLBE. Also, as I demonstrated in my reflection, analyzing these conversations revealed important impacts of my White privilege that I had not previously considered. In all of these cases, critical collaborative dialogue was key in allowing us to process and name these connections; attention to identity and power were essential in these dialogues (Bhansari, 2023b). This suggests that for White folx, ongoing, shared conversations can support our accountability, especially in embracing discomfort around our racial and linguistic identities.

In addition to embracing discomfort, my collaborators and I embraced joy as a key element of teaching and surviving in DLBE (Love, 2020; Pacheco & Hamilton, 2020). These moves to embrace joy and love were also essential to critical consciousness because they supported the Latine teachers to build an understanding of their purpose as teachers and to take action. For Brenda, this joy and love created moments that were more “significant” than all of the struggle and frustration she experienced. Further, for both Brenda and Silvia, hope and its connection to their identities as Latine women was essential to their continued efforts within DLBE even as they doubted and struggled every day. This indicates the importance of embracing a broad spectrum of emotions in shared work towards critical consciousness, particularly in combination with an awareness of identity (Pacheco & Hamilton, 2020; Palmer et al., 2019). Also, if humanizing research is meant to foster relationships of care and representations that reflect the full range of human experience, attention to emotions is essential (Chaparro, 2020; Paris, 2011). Attention to emotion supported us to see and name injustice, navigate challenges together, and recognize each other’s humanity in doing so.

Implications

This article holds several valuable implications for research and DLBE programs. In particular, the emotions and experiences my collaborators shared have implications for efforts to retain and support novice teachers of Color in DLBE. In what follows, I discuss these, beginning with connections to Research Methods.

In addition to paying attention to the emotions of my collaborators, I have worked to make my own emotions visible including those I shared with my collaborators and those I felt reflecting on this work. I have done this with the understanding that an essential part of my role as a White, female researcher with ties to a university is to make myself open to critique and feedback and hold myself accountable to growth for (and with) my research community. If researchers endeavor to foster critical consciousness in DLBE classrooms and programs, I believe we must include ourselves in the process of building this consciousness, which involves deep vulnerability (Nagar, 2014). Researcher emotions and reactions matter, as does ongoing work to make sense of these within the communities with whom we work. As Nagar (2014) and other feminist researchers suggest, this can support the formation of solidarity and collective action needed for change (Keating, 2005; Swarr & Nagar, 2010). This article indicates that attention to researcher emotions is important in collaborative, critical research drawing on humanizing methods that aim to work towards social justice.

This article also suggests more research on novice teacher emotion is needed, specifically the connection between novice teachers of Color's emotions and justice-oriented pedagogy. As this and other articles have indicated, teachers of Color can draw on funds of emotional knowledge related to linguistic, racial, and other forms of oppression to navigate their challenging realities (Sosa-Provencio, 2019; Winograd, 2009). Further research could investigate the impacts of making space to discuss and make sense of emotions throughout the school year. Also, further research could center on the potential of affinity group spaces to provide such space for teachers of Color (Varghese et al., 2019).

Finally, this article has several implications for practice within DLBE programs, and elementary schools more broadly. My research collaborators have indicated that the emotional challenges of first year teaching in DLBE were overwhelming and threatening their well-being, including challenging their sense of self. How can we create humanizing, justice-centered programs if we do not acknowledge and support teachers, particularly teachers of Color, to navigate this reality? I believe in order to be accountable to these amazing teachers, we need to stand beside them as researchers, administrators, and community members; acknowledge and honor the strength of their feelings and depth of their knowledge; and find ways to collectively change what we can together.

Conclusion

I would like to share a few open questions related to the implications of this study for both research and practice:

- How can DLBE programs and schools foster more spaces for teachers to process, listen to and learn from their emotions?
- How can DLBE programs and schools better support novice teachers, especially novice teachers of Color, as they experience intense emotions in their work?

- How can researchers engage with vulnerability throughout the process of designing and implementing research and remain open to critical feedback and learning?
- How can mutual vulnerability and efforts to embrace emotion support the formation of critical consciousness and its implementation in DLBE?

For Latine teachers, drawing on emotions creates opportunities to express embodied knowledge and discover means for navigating the system. Furthermore, researchers can extend this critical consciousness to their own work through ongoing reflection and “radical vulnerability” (Nagar, 2014). This supports researchers to remain open to ongoing growth, evaluation by research communities, and efforts to change.

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Appendix A

Second semi-structured interview protocol

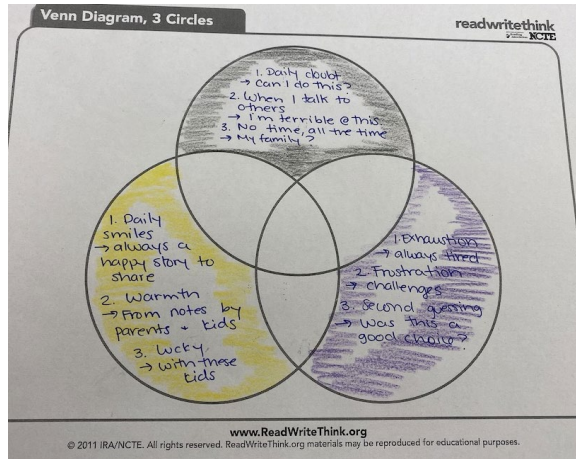
Introduction: As I told you before (and maybe you remember), I'm particularly interested in your emotions as a teacher and the ways in which these emotions connect to your decision-making and critical consciousness (or awareness of power) as a teacher. So, this time we're going to delve deeper into your emotions and how they connect to your identity. I'm going to try out a couple of things that I haven't done before to see if they help us make connections, and if it doesn't work for you, I appreciate your feedback at the end.

- 1) What do you think you have realized about bilingual teaching over the past few months that you didn't know before? How have these realizations come about?
- 2) How would you describe your identity as a teacher? How do you feel being in this identity (comfortable/conflicted etc.)? Are there certain moments when this feels differently than others?
- 3) Now we're going to an activity that is meant to help you think about your emotions while you're teaching. Think of three emotions that you have experienced during the past month in your work. You can name these either with words or colors and add those to the circles. Then write a couple of examples of times when these emotions came up for you in the circles, words or phrases are fine, I'm going to ask you to share this with me orally afterwards. Because I am asking you to be vulnerable, I believe I should be vulnerable too, so although I want you to have the space to share as much as you want, I will also share my diagram with you.
- 4) (Follow up specific questions)
- 5) How do you think that the emotions you represented are connected to your identity?

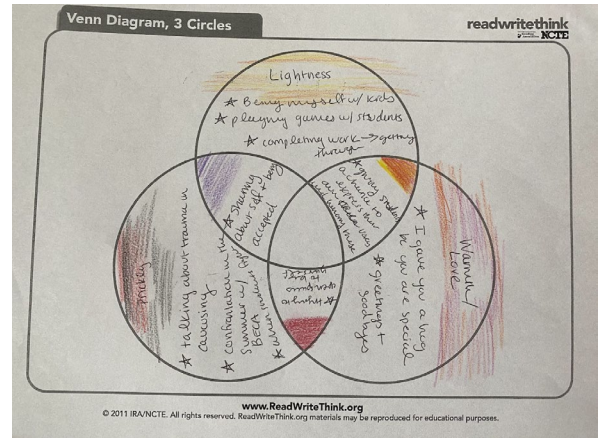
Appendix B

Venn Diagrams created during interviews:

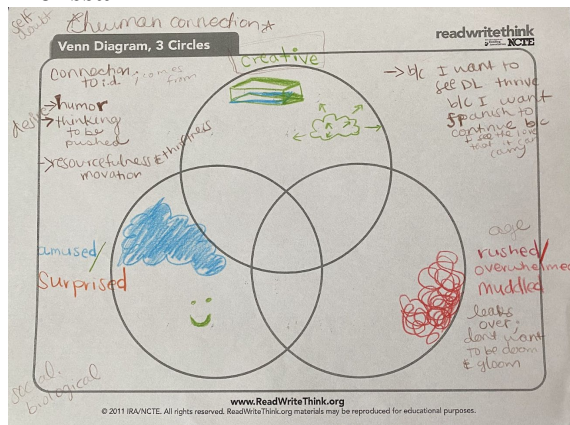
Brenda



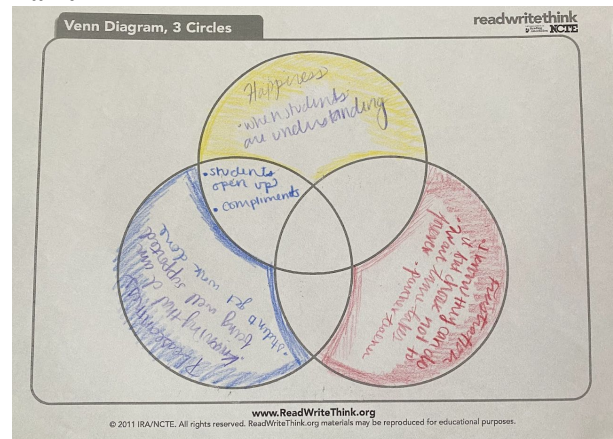
Researcher



Melissa



Yaritzi



Silvia

