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Disrupting Invisibility in Dual Language: Visualizing #BlackGirlMultilingualMagic Through Selfies & Spaces

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Abstract: What started as a social media based movement, the viral hashtag #blackgirlmagic has transcended into a way of being, and seeing Black girls and women. The essence and prevalence of #blackgirlmagic continues to defy all odds and perceptions in sports, society, and other social spaces where Black girls have been rendered invisible, including in the expanding landscape of dual language education. This study centered and illustrated the narratives of Black girl multilinguals (BGMs) in two-way Spanish/English dual language elementary programs in Southern California. Using Black girlhood (Brown, 2009, 2013) as the theoretical underpinning, this study employed youth-centered, visual-based methods to explore the lived experiences of BGMs at their school sites, their homes, and in their communities. The photographs and phototalks together provided evidence that BGMs practiced freedom in and across their linguistic repertoires that ignored limitations and boundaries of language allocation and fixed language settings, which created a space for self-expression. This study contributes to a significant gap in the research of Black Girl Multilingualism and suggests further research and practice reimagine two-way dual language education as a potential freedom space for BGMs at the full intersection of their identities: Black, girl, young, and multilingual.

Keywords: Black girlhood, dual language education, elementary education, multilingualism, participatory methods, visual methods

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Introduction

Black girl magic, commonly referred to across social media platforms as *#blackgirlmagic*, was coined in 2013 by Cashawn Thompson to highlight and center the positivity and success of Black women. What started as a hashtag and a mantra for her circle of women has now become a global phenomenon and viral social media presence. Though the success of Black women is commonly misunderstood or diminished, it does not stop its existence. According to Thompson, "sometimes our accomplishments might seem to come out of thin air" (Thomas, 2015, p. 6), articulating the mystique or magic found in every Black woman and girl.

Over a decade later, *#blackgirlmagic* is no longer new. However, its reign across social media platforms is far from over, and it is still garnering popularity. The hashtag is attached to any and everything that centers and highlights positivity, representation, and celebration in the Black girl community. Just like there is no single identity or monolith existence as a Black woman, there is no specific definition of #blackgirlmagic. Like magic, whether or not you see or believe, it exists. One of the greatest powers of #blackgirlmagic is we, as Black girls, have the freedom to define what it means to us. This definition is inclusive to all aspects and intersectional identities we possess, both now, and those that we will grow into. Although one Black girl's definition is not enough to harness or express its fullness, to me, as a Black girl, a possessor of #blackgirlmagic, it is the power and resilience of Black girls and women across the diaspora, simply living and enjoying at the fullness of their intersectionalities. Doing this in a collective capacity allows us to center, connect, and celebrate amongst ourselves, as we live in a world that constantly does the opposite.

We see *#blackgirlmagic* in the headlines with prominent figures and their stories, such as the fierce fight of Tamika Mallory of Until Freedom, and every time our forever First Lady Michelle Obama graced our screen, offering messages of hope, collective freedom, and the future of our Black girls. This magic appeared again as Black women shattered ceilings, with the inauguration of the current U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris, which was preceded by the soul-stirring poetry of the young Black girl poet Amanda Gorman. Around the same time, Shirley Weber was sworn in as the first Black Secretary of State of California. The power that Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson displayed while being interrogated was otherworldly. She displayed such grace and dignity as her identity, credentials, and presence were questioned. The magic is not just in poetry and politics but it is witnessed every time Simone Biles defies gravity and logistics and breaks a new gymnastics record. It was seen in how Sha'Carri Richardson commanded the attention of us all and also reminded the announcer of the proper way to say her name. We reveled in *#blackgirlmagic* each and every time a Black girl won her medal at the 2024 Summer Olympics. This magic was on center stage as Angel Reese talked, danced, and balled her way to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) national basketball championship. It is not just famous women in politics and sports uplifting and highlighting the magic of Black women, but also in education and in our everyday heroes who harness these magical powers. Another example was the public tenure debate for the illustrious Dr. Nichole Hannah-Jones, who took her talents to Howard University after the University of North Carolina finally offered her tenure (Legal Defense Fund, 2021). Ladson-Billings (2017) referred to this magic as "simultaneously ordinary and extraordinary" (p.1), as she described Black women such as Fannie Lou Hamer as both "regular and magic" (p. 1). This dual nature of the ordinary and extraordinary can be linked to the magic of

multilingualism, and this study seeks to explore the intersection of *#blackgirlmagic* and linguistic capital in and outside of the classroom. The *#blackgirlmagic* has been penned for decades by the illustrious Audre Lorde and bell hooks and this magic continues to be cited, paying homage and honor to Black women writers. This magic exists even in the youngest - those in the earliest years of their Black girlhood – like Bellen Woodard, the 10-year-old crayon activist. Bellen created a crayon pack that celebrates the diversity of skin colors and ensures every Black student has a crayon-to-color representation of themselves and their worlds on paper. Bellen has not only created a crayon pack but started a movement called More Than Peach, in which she imagines "plac[ing] multicultural crayons in the hands of all students, and influencing many other [brands] to reconsider and expand product inclusion" (www.morethanpeach.com, 2022).

Even if people are not viewing or reading about this magic in the news, it is still there. Whether visible or not, the daily existence of being a Black girl is magic and is a space of resistance and Black joy. The pervasiveness of this #blackgirlmagic appears in every genre and generation and has yet to be fully defined or realized. It is this #blackgirlmagic that humanizes Black girls and offers a space for them to live fully, much like Ruth Nicole Brown's (2009, 2013) "freedom spaces" in her theory of Black girlhood. The purpose of this study is to visualize this #blackgirlmagic in dual language programming (specifically Spanish and English) from the gaze of Black girl multilinguals (BGM).

#BlackGirlMagic in Education

Black girls exude this power, with millions of representations of it, yet #blackgirlmagic is commonly stifled in society and the education sector. Education and schooling can be a nurturing space and a positive environment, yet the reality of schooling and Black girls can be very different. According to a report from the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) (United States Department of Education, 2016), Black girls nationwide in K–12 schools are suspended at 5 times the rate as their white girl peers and are disproportionately targeted and disciplined for dress code violations (Annamma et al., 2019; National Women's Law Center, 2016). Monique Morris's (2019) film, *Pushout,* combines video and startling statistics of the realities Black young girls face in their classrooms and on school campuses. These disciplinary actions range from being kicked out of class to being violently dragged across the floor by the school security officer, without accountability to the perpetrator (Kinnard, 2016).

The National Women's Law Center has released multiple reports specifically about the dress codes at public schools and how they offer more harm than good, especially to Black students. Adding to the consequences of subjective infractions, Black girls feel alienated, targeted, and voyeured by both male and female adults (National Women's Law Center, 2016). Even when not being harassed or surveyed about behavior or choice of clothing, Black girls are routinely excluded and overlooked for talented and gifted programs, and this underrepresentation is a national equity issue (Evans-Williams, 2014). This oversight has resulted in only 5.2% of Black girls being selected to participate in gifted and talented programming compared to 35% of white girls being selected for participation, according to the CRDC (2009) report. With the resilience and brilliance of Black girls comes the creation of safe and sustainable spaces of freedom (Brown, 2013) for self-actualization.

As hard as the societal and political forces attempt to extinguish this *#blackgirlmagic*, Black feminist scholars are working as hard, if not harder, to center and showcase this magic. From the historical

perspectives of Audre Lorde and Patricia Hills Collins to the contemporary writings of bell hooks and Kimberlé Crenshaw, and the current Black girls in education scholars, Venus Evans-Winters and Ruth Nicole Brown, Black girls who have been historically invisible are appearing in print, repeatedly, and across multiple modes. As a Black girlhood scholar, I too hope to add to the visibility and advocacy of Black girls in all manifestations of their magic, one being their linguistic identities.

As stated previously, Black girls are routinely excluded and overlooked from talented and gifted programs nationally (Evans-Williams, 2014). Mims' (2022) also highlighted the "underrepresentation of Black girls in gifted and talented education" (p. 100). As dual language programming can be viewed as gifted education (Roda & Manken, 2024), given the advanced academic rigor and instruction and metacognition in multiple languages, the research has shown that when Black students are given access, they will excel.

It is important to hone in on Black girls because rarely is this group studied specifically. Studying and accounting for the extra layers and nuanced intersectionality of being both Black and girl in society is often lost by grouping Black girls into racialized and gendered research and literature. Butler (2018) cautions that "Black girls are hidden in statistics for "Black" students or "girl" students, but neither report makes room for a holistic analysis of how Black girls are performing. (p. 32)" It is at the intersections of race and gender that the experiences of becoming a Black woman are constructed. To understand women and girls, we, as emerging Black Girlhood scholars, have to take up the call of Evans-Winters and other scholars as "there is a need for more scholarship in the field of education that looks at the educational experiences and school processes of African-American girls" (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010, p. 12).

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#BlackGirlMagic in Dual Language Education

A growing focus and area of research over the last few decades is dual language and bilingual education. While the number of programs, initiatives, and articles about dual language and bilingual education have been increasing, the inclusion of Black students and Black girls specifically has not. Much of the literature, even after Valdes' (1997, 2018) cautionary notes has continued to narrate the dual language landscape as inclusive of white English language speakers and Latinx Spanish speakers. "English speaker versus English learner binary that misrepresents the varied experiences of Black American children in DLBE programs, " (Frieson, 2022, p. 48). This binary disregards all Black students enrolled and learning in DLBE programs, and also highly disregards the spaces such as Southern California, DC, North Carolina, New York, etc where Black students have and are large and growing percentages of the DLBE program populations. "By better understanding the experiences of people of color beyond the Brown-white binary in dual language, we can expand policy considerations to be increasingly inclusive and equity-remedying" (Blanton et al., 2021, p. 2). There is a dire need to

provide research and literature on the language and literacy experiences of Black girl multilinguals (BGMs). As BGMs are moving through and developing their linguistic capital and identity, their full linguistic repertoires need to be explored and explored on their own terms. This notion of linguistic repertoires represents the understanding of language and its practices as consisting of one entity, made up of multiple inputs of languages and linguistic capital. Scholars such as Wei & Garcia (2022) note that "it is imperative that we focus on the bilingual students' *unitary repertoire"* and Frieson and Scalise (2021) "invite more scholars to take a closer look at the ways in which Black Language speakers fluidly move throughout their linguistic repertoires on a daily basis" (p.226). Instead of a harsh and concrete switch between one language to another, multilinguals move, or even glide, across their full range of linguistic genius.

Negrette (2021) calls for, "the need to conduct research in DLI contexts that can clearly address the significance of intersectional socially-constructed ideas such as race, ethnicity, and language in DLI spaces (p. 15). Researchers Presiado and Frieson have joined me in answering the call to fill this void. In their cross-case analysis of case studies about BGMs, Presiado and Frieson (2021) worked, "in pursuit of a humanizing vision for Black girls' education in multilingual spaces" (p. 2) as they "extend Valdes's (1997, 2018) warnings" and present the counternarratives that more accurately demonstrate the linguistic capabilities of BGMs. What if dual language programming could be a collective space of freedom (Brown, 2013), where girls could speak, learn, and dream in the fullness of who they are and are becoming?

What if dual language classrooms had the potential to be a space of "affirming act[s] of literacy (Price-Dennis et al., 2017)", where girls could be free from the surveillance and hypervisibility that takes place in society? In this vision, dual language education has the possibility to be "a space of Black girls' futuremaking (Turner & Griffin, 2020), where girls can be anything they want to be, and in any language they choose to employ. As much of the DLBE literature lacks references to Black girls and almost none of it centers on Black girls, this qualitative study provided space and intentionality around the rich literate practices, and linguistic artistry (Frieson, 2021) of these young Black multilingual learners. In a space where "nuanced experiences of Black students often go unheard" (Frieson, 2022, p. 47) and unseen, this study worked to visualize the lived experiences of BGMs. The research questions guiding this inquiry were

As a multimodal researcher, scholar, former elementary school teacher, and multilingual, I exist at many of the same interlocking identities as the girls in this study. Moving through the world in a body marked Black and girl and being able to extend my linguistic repertoire to include Spanish in addition to standardized American English and African American Language (AAL), I am uniquely equipped to research alongside these young Black Girl Multilinguals.

1. What is revealed about BGMs' multilingual lives, literacies, and experiences through self-created photography?

2. How do BGMs visualize themselves as they negotiate their identities as Black, girl, young, and multilingual?

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Black Girlhood Framework

Black girls have been here, performing magic, in every sector and context, however, we have not always been centered in the research nor highlighted for the magic we possess. This magic, *#blackgirlmagic*, the power and resilience of Black girls and women across the diaspora, simply living, enjoying, and accomplishing feats at the fullness of their intersectionalities, has not been fully realized in education, more specifically, dual language education. While attending to the traditional and white-normed research practices, much of the research about Black girls has been from a deficit space or has lacked a Black girl-centered agenda. This is seen through the work of Evans-Winters (2019), who articulated the need for qualitative inquiry that does justice to the study of Black girls and women. She is joined by Brown (2009), who authored an intersectional analysis of Black girlhood studies to highlight the experience of being Black and girl within the context of childhood. Brown's (2009) definition of Black girlhood is "the representations, memories and lived experiences of being and becoming in a body marked as youthful, Black and female" (p. 1). Brown's groundbreaking framework serves as the theoretical underpinning of this study.

Although Black girlhood includes the word "girl," Brown (2009) asserted that it is not dependent upon age or maturity. This continuum allows Black girlhood to push back on the adultification that often happens to Black girls and offers a space of black childhood freedom for girls through this framework. Brown's (2013) subsequent work outlined the tenets of her definitions of Black girlhood framework, which are (a) articulate visionary Black girlhood as a meaningful practice, (b) showcase Black girl inventiveness of form and content, (c) expand our vision of Black girlhood beyond identity, (d) sense radical courage, and interdependence, and (e) honor praxis, the analytical insight that comes only by way of consistent action and reflection. These tenets provide an offering for a way into the lives of Black girls through researching with and beside them. When we come alongside the Black girls, we create spaces to honor and value their brilliance and experience their magic.

I, along with many Black Girlhood scholars and critical researchers, have used a variety of research methods that allow for better research practices to study Black girls more authentically, with attention to their intersectional identities. Intentionally using youth-centered, visual-based methods at the intersection of Black girlhood allows this research to offer a more accurate depiction of the multidimensional lives of Black girls. In addition to the photograph and the narrative coming together as a more complete unit of understanding the girls, given the age of the participants, youth-centered approaches had to be embedded as well. These approaches included creating a meet-and-greet, having the girls meet with each other as well, providing multiple opportunities for interactions with me, having some time just for Q&A, and explaining parts of the study, who I was, and how to use a digital camera.

Black Girl Methodologies

Settings: Black Girls Gather

This youth-centered visual inquiry was conducted across two Dual Language Education school sites in the Southern California region which incorporated Spanish and English as the language of instruction. Due to the geographical region's Black population and the low enrollment of Black students in Dual Language Bilingual Education programming, more than one school site was necessary to meet the goals of this study. School sites were selected based on the following criteria: (a) school-wide dual language elementary school, (b) two-way 90/10 or 50/50 program model, (c) had been in operation for at least 2 years, and (d) a public or district-dependent charter school site. As previously mentioned, two-way dual language programs (TWDLE) are a particular form of bilingual education program in which children who are dominant speakers of both instructional languages, such as English and Spanish, are brought together in the same classroom to learn each other's languages. The most common structures under two-way dual language education are 90/10 and 50/50 programmatic models. This program structure was chosen as a criterion for this study because this model offers the most diversity in student populations and has the goal of sociocultural competence as one of its guiding principles.

The last requirement for the selection of the school sites was that the schools were public schools. Many DLBE schools are lottery, charter, or private, which creates additional barriers to access for Black students. Those issues are beyond the scope of this study. The school sites chosen for this study were Hache Elementary (HE) and Fern Academy (FA). Hache Elementary and Fern Academy are both DLBE schools in Southern California. Both schools have a student population of around 500 students. HE has about a 2% Black student population, and FA has an almost 20% Black student population. Both schools also implement a 90/10 instructional model of the TWDLE program structure.

Participants: Black Girl Multilinguals

To participate in this study, students met the following criteria: (a) identify as a Black girl, (b) be currently enrolled in first through fifth grade (i.e., 6–10 years old), and (c) have attended a DL program for at least 2 years. The criteria were based on multiple factors. This study centered on the multifaceted existence of Black girls, so it was crucial that students identified as a Black girl. Due to the historic inclusion of Latinx and Hispanic involvement in bilingual education, these students do not face the same marginalization in the expansion of DLBE. In an effort to focus on lived experiences, the goal was to have participants who had attended a dual language program for at least 2 years. Since some DLE programs begin with prekindergarten (PreK) or transitional kindergarten (TK), some students have experienced PreK or TK and kindergarten in a dual language program; thus, first graders were chosen for this study. To add to the literature on elementary school, this study was limited to the traditional elementary school grade span of kindergarten through fifth-grade students. After all these criteria were met, the participant pool resulted in seven self-identified Black girls in Grades 1–5.

The girls that were selected as a part of this study all identified as Black, not Afro-Latina. This distinction was important to center the nature of being both Black American and an additive multilingual. None of the girls in this study had a heritage language of Spanish spoken in the home. English is their named home language. The design of this study focused specifically on those students most marginalized and underrepresented in TWDLE

programming—BGMs. Each of the girls in this study was amazing to work with and get to know, and each had a distinct influence on me and on this study. Seven girls created the group of BGM for this study. The girls were all students in Grades 1–5 at a southern California DLBE school that has been in operation for at least 5 years. Five of the seven girls were the only BGM in their classroom. The other two girls were in the same classroom.

Table 1

Participant Characteristics

Participant	School Site	Grade	Home Language
Leah	Hache Elementary	1st	English
Candace	Hache Elementary	3rd	English
Megan	Hache Elementary	3rd	English
Mercedes	Hache Elementary	4th	English
Kelly	Fern Academy	4th	English
Carmen	Fern Academy	4th	English
Egypt	Hache Elementary	5th	English

Data Collection: Black Girls Create

In order to provide the space necessary to allow the BGMs to lead and create, this study adopted youth-centered participatory visual methods (Chaflen, 2020). In this approach, a central understanding of is collaboration, as "attention is drawn to collaborations of participants and researchers in the production of pictorial expressions of personal thoughts and life circumstances" (Chaflen, 2020, p. 2). In pairing youth-centered approaches and linguistic flexibility, the girls were free to create outside of strict researcher-made regulations and set linguistic boundaries. As a part of this study, the girls were asked to, "take pictures of places that are important to you, and where you use your languages." To do this, the girls were given digital cameras to photograph their lived experiences as BGMs. Each participant led me on a one-on-one student-led school walkthrough. This school tour served multiple purposes: (a) to continue to build rapport with students, (b) to do a brief overview of how to use the digital cameras, and (c) to give the girls an opportunity to take pictures at their school site. It was important that their point of view was centered during the photo creation part of this process and that they experienced autonomy and leadership in the narration of their stories.

In addition to the photographs taken during the student-guided tour, participants were asked to take photographs in other spaces that they deemed important to their multilingual experience. Using photographs offers an inclusive alternative to traditional methods of research. Students led a school tour and took pictures of their environments to narrate their educational experiences from their point of view visually. In response to this prompt, the girls guided me all over the school, and we arrived at different places, such as the library, playground, lunch table, and music class. The photos they took offered information about the participants, spaces, places, and events integral to their dual language education and multilingual identities. I was able to see trends and patterns across and within photo groupings. I saw a lot of pictures taken of lunch and recess spaces, and many girls took pictures of the art displayed around their school sites. The activity yielded 75 photos in total. Each BGM created between two and 10 photos. As the student-led school walkthrough concluded, each participant was loaned a digital camera to borrow for one week to take additional photos. The girls

were prompted to take 5–20 pictures at home and in their community, and additional school photos if they desired. "Black girlhood is tied to geospatial location," (Butler, 2018, p.29) and it was imperative that this study moved through the girls' full and vast linguistic and spatial worlds. After 1 week, I picked up all the cameras from the school site. This brief visit served as another opportunity to continue building rapport with the girls. The seven participating BGMs created 116 photographs across schools, homes, and their communities.

It was necessary to allow for possibilities outside of the strict confinement and regulation of language use in the classroom and school settings. It is common in DLE to mandate and allocate times for language instruction and language use. Translanguaging has been popularized and appears in many DLE programs, however, most programs, including the ones in this study, dedicated time and content subjects to be taught and experienced in Spanish or English. In using this method of inquiry, the girls were able to create and relay meaning through and across multiple modalities. When offered the autonomy and agency to document their own lives and create visual accounts of their movement through the world as Black, girls, young, and language the girls offered an additional glimpse of multilingual youth. All the photographs collected and analyzed as part of this study were taken by the BGMs. I helped facilitate this process by providing digital cameras for the girls to use at school and in their communities. By handing the students cameras, I was handing them autonomy and access to another mode of communication, which offered an additional medium for the participants to share their authentic stories.

Data Analysis: Black Girls Chat

In addition to the girls creating and curating photography collections, these girls and I also created a community. The photos served as a starting point for relating to each other and launching into conversation during the Phototalks, which were our semi-structured table talks. These talks also served as the initial phase of the data analysis. Informed by Yenawine and Housen's Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), the photo talks allowed the BGM-created photography to be centered, and to elicit further conversation. "Photographs cannot be separated from the photographers who create them" (Cappello & Hollingsworth, 2008, p.448), just as the language cannot be separated from the speakers. In researching Black girls in spaces they occupy at the crux of their intersectionality, it is imperative and with due diligence that nuanced methodologies and approaches for analysis be employed. It was necessary to hand the control over to the Black girls by handing them the cameras. By successfully integrating photography with critical analysis, I could center and document the lived experiences of BGMs as they explore and negotiate their interlocking and developing identity markers at school, home, and in the community across their full linguistic repertoires. The Phototalks were group chats around a table that lasted between 45-75 mins. The BGMs were picked up from their classroom and they chose a comfortable spot for us to sit and chat. Each of the Phototalks began with introductions, and to my surprise, many of the BGMs did not know each other. Each of the girls was given a stack of their printed photographs and was asked to look at all the photos and review and revise the collection. This curation resulted in the final data corpus, inclusive of the pictures that they felt answered the prompt, "Take pictures of places that are important to you and where you use your languages". Some girls removed pictures that were too blurry for their liking, those that were an accident or practice. This curation, giving the girls the power to select, organize, and present their photographic art to the group was another way to ensure their autonomy and leadership in this

project. It was during this time that the girls shared their photography and themselves with each other as we chatted together about the lived experiences of being BGMs. The Phototalk consisted of the three questions that make up the VTS protocol, 1) "What's going on in this image", 2) "What do you see that makes you say that", and 3) "Is there anything else we can find"? I moved around the table so that I could chat one-on-one with each of the girls, and suggested that they share their photos with the BGMs next to them in the meantime. The final question posed to the entire group was "Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about being a BGM?"

Black Girlhood and Data Analysis

The study of BGMs could only be accomplished by returning to the theoretical framing of Black girlhood studies to aid in the criticality of the analysis. Brown's (2009) working definition of Black girlhood is, "the representations, memories and lived experiences of being and becoming in a body marked as youthful, Black and female" (p. 1). The themes and tenets of Brown's Creative Potential of Black Girlhood Framework (2009, 2013) were used in conjunction with Yenawine & Housen's VTS protocol to conduct a critical thematic visual analysis of the data created by the BGMs. Using these combined analysis processes, a constant comparison approach (Glaser, 1965) was used to continuously attend to the multimodal data. By successfully integrating visual analysis, constant comparison, and critical analysis, I centered and documented the lived experiences of Black girl multilinguals as they explored and negotiated their intersectional identity markers at school, home, and in the community in whatever language they wanted. Subsequent coding led to the evolution of the major findings; *linguistic freedom: beyond Black girlhood identity* and *freedom of self-expression via radical courage and interdependence.*

The Freedoms of #BlackGirlMultilingualMagic

When BGMs use photography and move within their full linguistic repertoires, #blackgirlmultilingualmagic is revealed. This study offered, "necessary counternarratives to the stereotypical images of Black girls," (Taaffe, 2014, p.190). One facet of two-way dual language programming is the allocation of instructional languages. Often languages live or are implemented during a certain block of the day, or on certain days. However, in the freedom of language and spaces that was demonstrated by the girls, their languages, all of them, went wherever they did. These BGMs, even with all of society's harsh and rigid realities, see themselves and move through their academic and social worlds as free. As autonomous, agentive, capable, and independent. What a magical way for these girls to live!

As a response to the exploration of the questions posed in this study, these BGMs visualized and articulated themselves as free and confident in themselves as Black, girl, young, and multilingual. As evidenced by their curated photography collections and the way they talked to each other and to me, about their lived experiences and photos, these BGMs expressed linguistic freedom and a freedom of self-expression, at the extensions of their Black girl identities and with radical courage.

Linguistic Freedom: Beyond Black Girlhood Identity

The first theme of this study is *linguistic freedom*: beyond Black girlhood identity. The girls offered and revealed notions that moved past the identity markers of Black girlhood; young, Black, and girl. The BGMs demonstrated their freedoms within their linguistic identities as well. This freedom and fluidity of language followed the BGMs everywhere. As the girls transitioned between home, school, and

their communities, their language and other intersecting identities transitioned with them. Just as their Blackness is embodied, so is their girlhood, as well as their linguistic repertoire. It is in and across these spaces that the girls demonstrated their emancipation from the linguistic borders that exist as they transitioned between school and home, from home to other places in their neighborhoods and communities.

The girls in this study were engaged in their languages across spaces. Hamilton (2010) explains literacy as a social practice to includes participants, activities, resources, settings, and domains. This study helps to elevate the importance of the social context and aspects of literacy, which are just as important, if not even more so in the development of biliteracy. Biliteracy, including the domains of listening and speaking, is embedded in the social structures of the girl's experience. This experience, for school-age girls, is inclusive of the playground, the lunch table, the home, and the community, as referenced in Figure 1 in Appendix A. The Black Girl Multilinguals engage with their languages across time and space, as they are mapping their identities and sense of self.

It is not surprising that these young girls, as they are negotiating their identity markers, place high value and importance on their spaces and places of socialization. Out of the entire 116 photographs, 31 were of lunch and/or recess spaces. This was only second to the total number of pictures taken outside of school. It is also worth noting that each of the seven girls took a picture of lunch and/or recess, and every girl brought up lunch and/or recess in the PhotoTalks. At lunch and recess, the girls have less restriction of norms, rules, and linguistic parameters. While there was some representation of classroom spaces, as seen in Figure 1, there were not many. Overall, only 7 out of 116 photographs were in a classroom. However, Megan did include that she speaks Spanish "mostly at school." In the photographs taken at school, it was also interesting that only one photo was taken with a teacher. There was only one teacher depicted in a photo, and when asked "What's going on in this picture?" Egypt answered, "That's me and my Spanish teacher."

Outside of lunch and recess areas, the spaces most represented in the collection of photographs were in the home, or pictures of the home and community. In narrating the photos that were most important to Carmen, she began her talk by saying "This is mi casa (see Figure 1 in Appendix A)." Other girls included pictures of their homes as well. Some girls even went into detail describing the specific places where they used their Spanish. Leah included, "I speak Spanish in the living room and in my bedroom."

In addition to pictures taken inside the home, community spaces were represented as well. Carmen talked about how she goes on walks around her neighborhood while practicing Spanish with her little sister, who also knows Spanish. Megan included a picture of the doctor's office where she used her language. For these girls, school is not the limit or the boundary of where their Spanish language use begins or ends.

While not visible in the photographic data, it is important to note that expressions of AAL were demonstrated in the conversations with the girls. Although none of the girls named AAL when having conversations about the languages they speak, there were instances of AAL use in the time I spent with the girls. The only instances that AAL was observed was when they were in a conversation with me. Even at their young ages, there were instances of final consonant blend reduction, and the habitual be use among two of the girls, Leah and Egypt. These conventions are common AAL grammatical and syntactical features (Green, 2002). It is worth noting

that as these girls embody their existing and developing linguistic identities, their linguistic freedoms span across Spanish, English, and AAL, even though AAL has not been named in their academic or social communities. The lack of visual representation of AAL is aligned with its lack of visibility and status in dual-language spaces.

Freedom of Self-Expression Via Radical Courage and Interdependence

In addition to the linguistic freedom expressed in the collection of photographs at school, at home, and in the community, another theme that this qualitative inquiry revealed was freedom of self-expression via radical courage and interdependence. This theme emerged in both the photos and the conversations with the girls. Freedom of expression was seen through the selfies that three of the girls added to their curated collections. Black girls used selfies to visualize themselves in their dual language spaces. In a space that historically and contemporarily excludes Black students, and specifically girls, these young Black girls decided to create their own space. To literally center themselves. In an act of both resilience and resistance, they put themselves into the story. The girls asserted their presence in this study and as BGMs by taking their own self-portraits. These selfies also serve as an expression of radical courage and interdependence (Brown, 2013). This tenet, radical courage and interdependence, is indeed a potent expression of the multimodal work embedded in Black girlhood. Black girls are courageous, and they need us to be too. Producing creative works requires vulnerability and a sense of courage to say, "I created this, and it is a reflection of me." At a time of growth when children are developing a sense of who they are, it takes safe and collective spaces to begin to discover themselves and their power. The courage and resilience Black girls display in the face of public scrutiny are admirable, powerful, and command respect. Black girls learn at a very young age the actions they may need to take to be actively seen and heard in a world where Black girls are frequently disregarded and disrespected. Although these young girls may exude wisdom and bravery beyond their years, we must stay in community with these girls and create a context of interdependence so that the girls know they are not alone.

Two of the BGMs, Kelly and Carmen also took selfies. Their selfies are shown below in Figures 2 and 3. During our Phototalk, Kelly also initiated a conversation around the inclusion of selfies in their photo collection.

Figure 2. Kelly's Selfie

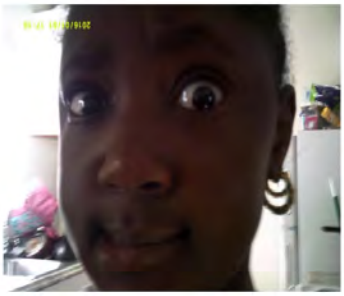

Figure 3. Carmen's Selfie

> Kelly: "Oh, I noticed you took a picture of yourself, so did I."
>
> Researcher: "Can you tell me more about why you wanted to put yourself in your pictures?"
>
> Carmen: "Well, before you told us about not putting pictures of people, I was like, well, I am doing this. I wanna be included; I want them to know who I am. So I'm like, (and then she mimics how she posed for her selfie)."

These selfies were visual representations of the

courage and resistance of Black girls. It is also a testament to the interdependence built as we do this work as Black girlhood researchers alongside Black girls. When they feel safe and seen we are offered a glimpse of their #blackgirlmagic and have an entry point to witness their *#blackgirlmultilingualmagic*. "A photograph taken by a Black girl is her way of talking back to those negative constructs," (Taaffe, 2014, 198), and demanding space to be both heard and seen. As a response to the prompt, "take pictures of places that are important to you and where you use your languages", over half of the girls included selfies as a response to this prompt. In offering themselves as a response to the prompt, the girls are offering themselves as important and as a site of multilingual language usage. In addition to the selfies being evidence of the girls' identity work and dual language experiences, it is also evidence of the girls centering themselves.

Many of the BGMs inserted themselves—or made themselves more visible in the study—by including selfies as part of the visual data. The selfies served as an example of understanding their identities as Black girls and the importance of visualizing this for themselves, others, and their identity development. The girls in this study were autonomous and free. They exercised this freedom in what they chose to (and chose not to) photograph, their self-proclamations, their resistance, and even the way they chose to center themselves. These girls are centering themselves in a world that constantly decides the reality, resistance, and possible fate of Black women by how every part of their lifestyle and choices are limited, condemned, or erased. Although all the girls understood my prompt not to take pictures of people, they chose resistance as a freedom space and purposely chose to make themselves visible in spaces where they had been rendered invisible. To center themselves in this way, even in lieu of the prompts and guidelines given, they actively asserted themselves into the narrative to author their own story. Here again, is the agentive behavior of the girls in making sure that key players and main characters of their novelas.

Language shapes who we are and who we become, and therefore is an extension of our identity, and a dynamic portion of how we see the world, and move through the world.

Extending the Freedoms of Black Girl Multilinguals

The methodological approaches presented in this study also serve as spaces for further inquiry and exploration into the necessity of multimodality for the research of and with Black girls. Being able to see and hear the stories of BGMs granted us access that would not have emerged using monolingual and colonized approaches to research. Taaffe reminds us that "the use of photography enables us to produce meaning and ask and answer questions about our lives" (Taaffe, 2014, p. 195). This is especially important when Black girls, who often are not in spaces offer the questions or answers about their own livelihoods. The magic witnessed would not have been uncovered by using traditional research methodologies. Like Taaffe, conducting this study alongside BGMs I was able to "realize that the photographs are OUR data, OUR evidence that WE are here (2014, p. 196). The findings and lessons learned in this study offer insight into a population often invisible in educational research, and more specifically dual language scholarship —BGMs. By

sharing their experiences with me, these girls put forward new understandings and perspectives of what it means to both be and become a Spanish speaker in a DLBE at the elementary school level. Despite being few in number and not seeing representation of themselves in their classrooms and school sites, they are still being, becoming, and resisting, in English, African-American Language, and Spanish. As we continue exploring and creating potential freedom spaces and sustaining these spaces (Brown, 2013) for Black girls, we must include the magic of BGMs in research, literature, art, and conversations. Language shapes who we are and who we become, and therefore is an extension of our identity, and a dynamic portion of how we see the world, and move through the world. This study begins a conversation that needs to be continued around the lived experiences of BGMs in pursuit of linguistic justice (Baker-Bell, 2020).

As dual language education continues to expand in both private and public school settings, and opportunities to lengthen the language line (Alfaro et al, 2022) and deepen their linguistic practices via State Seals of Biliteracy and university language programming, it is imperative that BGMs at the intersection of their multifaceted identities are not only mentioned but are centered and amplified in the research and policies that impact dual language education. Future research in the area of BGMs should employ a variety of methodologies. Following the guidance of photography to tell a Black girl's truth (Taaffe, 2014) and cartography (Butler, 2018) to see how they move through spaces, we can be creative, and innovative, and show up as our full selves when we go research for and with Black girls. By expanding the entry points of methodology by using multimodal methods in collaboration with Black girlhood researchers can create a space to recenter and reclaim the magic of Black girls while also holding the truth that, "Black girls are so much more than magic. They are strong. They are smart. They are brave. They are resilient. They are capable" (Ladson-Billings, 2017, p. 3), and often they are multilingual.

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Appendix A

Figure 1. Visualizing Language; At School, At Home, and in the Community