This article explains the benefits of testimonio, or the creation of stories based on lived experience, identities, and explains the value of testimonio as a tool in epistemological research, particularly when working with a marginalized group, while focusing on pedagogy using a Chicana feminist lens. “Nepantla in our classrooms signal uncertain terrain, crossings, moving between identities, and confronting and contesting power—precisely the agency of our everyday lives. Pedagogies within/from Nepantla reveal fruitful tensions for exploring how we might experience transformative teaching and learning.”

The three main points introduced in this study are cultural dissonance, conciencia con compromiso, and cariño- meaning cultural dissonance, consciousness with commitment, and caring or authentic care. Cultural Dissonance is studied within families, looking at gender roles & expectations between schooling and family life. Conciencia con compromiso is shaped by early family narratives. Examples are provided in the article where Prieto and Villenas see how their participants negotiate the English-speaking world by translating for others, are involvement in community, develop critical perspective and expand world view. Cariño is the authentic notion of caring, as Valenzuela (1999) explains, “Caring theory addresses the need for pedagogy to follow from and flow through relationships cultivated between teacher and student” (p. 21). This is seen through dialogue and connection to community by cultivating students’ wholeness and inner selves.

As explained, the methodology for this study includes the use of testimonios of the authors. Gender roles and expectations, racial nativism, racial microaggressions are all observed in the research, as well as a noticeable separation between immigrant parents and U.S. born children. Stories of racial conflict provide a window into the lives of the narrators.

Paolo Friere’s ‘funds of knowledge’ is used to explain how children have other skills that can translate into the classroom and all students have intellectual capital to assist in their learning. Macedo (2000) emphasizes the power and ideology of words: “Language such as ‘border rats,’ ‘wetbacks,’ ‘aliens,’ ‘illegals,’ ‘welfare queens,’ and ‘non-White hordes,’ used by the popular press not only dehumanizes other cultural beings, but also serves to justify the violence perpetrated against subordinated groups” (p. 15) and these experiences affect students beyond the classroom.

This article focuses on the importance of transformation of aggressions into strengths and find agency in the tradition of Latina/Chicana intellectual thought. “Our testimonios are about building bridges to our collective power as the basis for compassionate pedagogy in teacher education classrooms.”