AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS: EXPLORING IMMIGRANT PARENTS’ EXPERIENCES AT AN URBAN HIGH SCHOOL

A thesis presented

by

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to

The School of Education

College of Professional Studies
University of Northeastern
Boston, Massachusetts
2016
Abstract
The purpose of this study is to examine the stories of immigrant Guatemalan parents who have children in a public high school located in Massachusetts. This study applied interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as a qualitative research approach to examine the lived experiences of these parents. Six parents participated in in-depth interviews to explore how immigrant Guatemalan parents perceive supports and structural deficiencies of the educational system and policies that obstruct their engagement. The (counter)stories voiced by immigrant Guatemalan parents reveal structural impediments that greatly impact Latina/o families. The theoretical frameworks for this study include Critical Race Theory and Latino Race Theory. The current academic literature on Latinas/os focuses on Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans, giving little attention to other Latina/o nationalities such as Guatemalans. Consequently, a purpose of this study is to contribute to existing research on Latina/o parent engagement, offering a new layer of understanding on how Guatemalan parents experience the American public education system.

Key words: family engagement, immigrant Guatemalans, social justice
Acknowledgements

My doctoral studies could not have happened without the support of four critical agents: my high school principal, my academic colleagues, my colleagues, and my family.

I would like to thank Greg DeMeo, principal of my high school, for the opportunity of entering his community where I have re-connected with my past. Most importantly, he has given me the opportunity to serve as a cultural broker with educators, staff, families, and community members where my skills and experiences have contributed to establishing a family-school-community relationship.

I want to express my special appreciation to Dr. Corliss Brown Thompson, my thesis advisor and professor, to Dr. Conn, my second reader, and to Dr. Drew Echelson, my third reader. Dr. Brown Thompson’s poignant guidance has given me clarity in developing my thoughts. Dr. Conn’s scholarship has assisted my doctoral project. Dr. Echelson’s academic leadership has been a valuable model and input in my research and practice.

Additionally, I would like to acknowledge my colleagues: Melissa Verde for her support as a scholar-practitioner who shared with me numerous conversations on our doctoral studies and cultural proficiency; Timothy McMahon, and Christopher Gelinas who push the meaning of relational in Latina/o student engagement to reflect patience, perseverance, and respect.

Lastly, an immeasurable gratitude goes to my husband and two sons: Xavier, Bruno, and Anselm for believing in me and supporting me endlessly through my studies and work on weekends. My gratitude extends to my parents, sister, and caregiver: Joanne, Roberto, Catherine, and Ignacia who are the driving forces behind this study. My identity and sense of being is grounded on our lived experiences that manifests itself in this study and which is an extension of our belief in helping Guatemalans find dignity and peace in their adoptive cities.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The North American public school system is experiencing a turning point in its student enrollment. According to the Pew Center for Research (Krogstad & Fry, 2014), minority students are outnumbering white students. The enrollment of Hispanics and Asian/Pacific Islanders, the two largest minority groups in the U.S. today, is increasing while the number of white student enrollment is declining (Krogstad & Fry, 2014). In 2013, Latinos represented 25% of American public school students (Fry, 2014). The percentage of Latinos and Asians/Pacific Islanders is projected to increase by 15.6 million by 2023; this represents a total of 30% enrollment in public schools in less than ten years (IES, 2014). This demographic change witnessed in schools and communities creates a new balance in which students of color constitute the majority and no single group can quantifiably claim majority (Cortes, 1999 as cited in Grant & Potter, 2011).

The Latino population growth across the country resonates in the state of Massachusetts. Between 2000 and 2010, Massachusetts experienced a low population growth of 3.1% while the Latino population increased by 46.6% (Granberry, 2015). In the city of Waltham, the setting of this study, a demographic change occurred from 2000 to 2013 where “Asians (59%), Latinos (54%), and blacks (44%) experienced population growth in the city, while whites experienced a 10% population decline (Granberry & Kabir, 2015, p. 3). A close look at the ancestry of Latinos in the city Waltham shows that 3,038 residents are Guatemalans, followed by 1,247 Puerto Ricans, and 1,134 Mexicans (Granberry & Kabir, 2015).

In an urban school district, where I, the researcher am employed, Latina/o children make up the second largest ethno-racial group: 35.2% of the 5,254 K-12 student population. The largest racial group is Whites at 47.1% followed by African American at 9.4% (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), 2015). Latina/o children make up the largest racial group in one of the three elementary schools in the district: 70.8 percent,
followed by Whites at 19.3% and African Americans at 5.1%. Guatemalans represent the largest Latina/o group. This demographic change represents a major shift in the district’s population. Latina/o students are outnumbering White students, who are slowly becoming the minority in the K-12 population. Furthermore, 17% of students are classified as limited-English proficient (LEP) students in the district. This number accentuates the challenges educators in my district face when Latina/o students run the highest risk of not completing high school of any ethnic group (Gándara, 1998, Ryan & Siebens, 2012).

While a culturally and linguistically diverse student population is growing in the district schools, the background of administrators and educators remain predominantly White and female (Durden & Truscott, 2013). According to the Massachusetts DESE school profile (2015), Waltham district has a total of 757 White staff, followed by 26 Hispanic and 10 African Americans. In the district, 631 staff members are female. School educators and staff members at my high school handle family engagement as an additional rather than as a critical practice linked to student achievement. The development of purposeful family engagement to build a meaningful partnership with families is not a priority at the high school or district. Instead, families are expected to interact with educators and administrators in traditional ways that include parent-teacher conference evenings, the school web page, telephone calls, and communication via flyers and letters. In addition, the unit of the family is understood in the traditional definition of parent(s) and children.

The growth of Latinas/os across the nation and specifically in my school district challenges educators to think differently about parent engagement, especially how Latina/o parent engagement can contribute to student academic success. Educational leaders need to do more to embrace and empower Latina/o parents as change agents in their school. Instead,
Latina/o parents are expected to follow the annual and traditional cycle of parent participation in at-school academic involvement and at-home academic involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Researchers describe at-home academic involvement as parents helping with homework, providing a quiet study room, mentoring, tutoring, or providing nurturance, instilling cultural values, and offering support through caring conversations (Eccles & Harold, 1996; LeFevre & Shaw, 2012; Scribner et al, 1999). At-school involvement is described as being available to school personnel’s requests, attending school events, volunteering, participating in organizations, contributing to student achievement, or taking part in decision-making processes (Auerbach, 2007).

Latina/o families encounter difficulties when interacting with educators. This is due to conflicting work schedules, transportation, and limited English proficiency (Smith et al., 2008). Latina/o parental involvement decreases as their children transition into high school. In some cases, this is due to (1) a bigger and more complex school building as well as an intimidating curriculum (Zill & Nord, 1994), (2) unclear expectations for parents (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005), (3) a lack of communication between schools and families (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Epstein, 1987; Hill et al., 2004; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005b; Scribner et al., 1999; Zill & Nord, 1994), or (4) parents’ feelings of decreased efficacy in being able to address the needs of their adolescents (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005b). Cultural issues and a lack of tools to navigate through the U.S. educational system compound these parameters. Additionally, parents’ consciousness of their legal status curbs trustworthy interactions or instills fear of being deported. This is further exasperated by many family members who are recently reunited after years of separation, which causes acute tensions both in the home and at the school.
Educational scholars provide evidence that parental involvement is linked to indicators of student school achievement (Alameda-Lawson et al., 2010; Desimone, 1999; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Regardless of families’ income, educational and ethnic background, when schools support parent engagement in their child’s learning, these children tend to perform better in class and tests, study in honor and Advanced Placement classes, attend school regularly, graduate from high school, and continue their studies in post-secondary education (Delgado-Gaitán, 2004; Epstein, 2001; Fan & Chen 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Van Velsor & Orozco, 2007). Yet, public schools are failing to teach Latina/o students (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Olivos, 2004) who, across the country, continue to have the highest dropout rate of all major racial and ethnic groups (Fry, 2014) and continue to perform poorly in standardized English tests (Fry, 2003). An achievement gap exists as much today as it did 50 years ago. The discussion on the “achievement gap” is viewed by some scholars as a screener to hide the inequities present in school systems that excludes students and families of color out of educational resources and opportunities (Olivos, 2004; Olivos & Quintana de Valladolid, 2005). Latinas/os, in particular those who have a low socio-economic status or are immigrants, are viewed from a deficit perspective, based on their language, skin-color, culture that subordinates their position in the interest of the dominant culture (Freire, 2014).

The rising presence of Latina/o students in schools calls for attention to the role of their families in the public education system. There are policies that define what family engagement should look like. Yet, discrepancies exist in how Latina/o parents, siblings and extended family actually engage in their child’s education. It is the intent of this study to examine how culture influences the ways in which Latina/o families at my high school support their children and how
this view clashes with the cultural norms of the school. To dismantle policymakers’ portrayal of Latinas/os as a homogenous group, what follows is a description of an ethnic group that predominates at my high school.

**Context and Background: Guatemalans**

The term Latino is an umbrella term that refers to Spanish-speakers from twenty republics from Central and South America. In Central America alone, there are seven countries that have Spanish as their principal language, although in the case of Belize, English dominates. The term “Latino” is not a one-size fits all definition and it does not represent a monolithic entity. Despite a common grammar, the seven countries of Central America exhibit a cultural heterogeneity as reflected in food, diet, language, landscape and socio-economic similarities. These differences distinguish Latinos from Euro-American culture and identities and bond these nations on their shared history of colonization, Western hegemony, exploitation and marginality (Jiménez Estrada, 2012). Furthermore, the term connects Latin Americans in their shared hope, dreams, and desire for “a just and balanced world” (Jiménez Estrada, 2012, p. 62). Despite these commonalities, nuances among Latin American nations exist.

Guatemala is not only the largest country in Latin America, but it also has the largest indigenous population, and it also ranks among one of the poorest, along with Nicaragua and Haiti (UNDP 2012). According to the World Bank (2013), 56% of Guatemalans live in poverty and approximately 16% live in extreme poverty. Poverty is defined as predominantly rural and extreme poverty is nearly exclusively rural. Parents are illiterate and their children tend to discontinue their studies after primary school. A contributing factor to low educational levels is the little incentive for landowners or the workers themselves to invest in human capital. Large plantation owners, owned by a small elite, provide subsistence wages to indigenous workers, diverting interest in
investing in education. Moreover, up until 1945 discriminatory policies prohibited indigenous people and women, in particular, from receiving an education.

This study will focus on the least privileged of this group, specifically the Guatemalans. It is essential to remember that this group, mainly Mayan, has survived a thirty-year era of systematic violence (Jiménez Estrada, 2012). During the 1990s, Guatemala came to have the worst human rights record in the world owing to the genocide targeted specifically at indigenous Guatemalans (Jiménez Estrada, 2012). During a 36-year civil war, Guatemala experienced the killing or disappearance of more than 200,000 people, the destruction of more than 600 villages, the displacement of more than one million Guatemalans, and the exodus of approximately 200,000 to Mexico and thousands to the United States (World Bank. 2013).

This targeting of this specific group reflects a deep-seated national apartheid and hatred towards the indigenous (M.C. Rendón, personal communication, October 13, 2015). There has been a persistence of centuries-old attempts to suppress the Maya native languages, customs and beliefs (Jiménez Estrada, 2012). Like many other countries on this continent, Guatemala contains a melting pot of cultures. The country’s foundation remains Mayan, although there are pockets of Asians, Europeans, and African roots in the Garifuna people of the Caribbean coast. The group that dominates the national politics and mores are of mixed-blood and generally referred to as Ladinos. The term stems from those who spoke Spanish (Latin, Latino) and therefore were part of the ruling class. Initially, they were of Spanish origin and carried attitudes about race and class that had been fashioned by a long co-existence with Arabs and Jews (M.C. Rendón, personal communication, October 13, 2015). Given the expulsion of both of these groups at the end of the 15th century and the subsequent colonization of the Americas, strong ideas about race and class marked the Spanish Conquest (M.C. Rendón, personal communication, October 13, 2015). These
ideas became crystallized through the subsequent centuries resulting in a Euro-centric set of values that continues to mark Guatemalans’ education and way of life (Jiménez Estrada, 2012; M.C. Rendón, personal communication, October 13, 2015).

The cultural domination by the Spanish-speaking rulers over indigenous populations has been brutal and overpowering since the Spanish conquest in 1524 (Jiménez Estrada, 2012). The “Indian problem,” as the Ladinos liked to describe their particular racist obsession, focused on putting down the majority of Guatemala’s population and remained a common prejudice through the 20th century (Jiménez-Estrada, 2012). It was characterized by denigrating all aspects of indigenous culture, be it language or dress. Much blame for the lack of national unity, social cohesion, and economic progress (de la Garza, 2014) was placed on the indigenous even though by the same token it made for an attractive tourist draw. In many cases, indigenous populations continue to be viewed as backward, ignorant, and slow (de la Garza, 2014). The “Indian problem” situated the indigenous people as racially inferior to mestizos (people of mixed descent) and blamed them for the country’s underdevelopment (López & Hanemann, 2009 as cited by de la Garza, 2014).

Both the Accord on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples between the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit and the Guatemalan government and, later, the Peace Accords (1996) ended the 36 year-long civil war and opened a new relationship between the state and Indigenous peoples (Jiménez Estrada, 2012). In accordance to the 1996 Peace Accord, education spending has increased at the primary level while spending on secondary and tertiary education is regressive (World Bank, 2013). Despite the progress in increasing primary school enrollment, Guatemala continues to lag behind in the overall performance of its education sector. For instance, the Guatemalan population has an average of 5 years of schooling, compared to a Central American
average of 7.1 years, 8.3 years in Costa Rica, and 9.4 years in Panama. The situation is even worse for the indigenous population: Guatemalans whose native language is not Spanish only have 4 years of schooling, compared to 7 years for native Spanish speakers (World Bank, 2013).

Ladinos, non-indigenous people who speak Spanish and wear Westernized attire, on the whole, live in the south-eastern part of the country or in the major cities. It is also important to note that there are many individuals who may ethnically be Mayan but who no longer speak indigenous languages and dress in Western clothes (M.C. Rendón, personal communication, October 13, 2015). It is also difficult for them to fit in to the larger national project owing on the whole to their limited education and financial resources. Many of these individuals may live in the more urban areas of Guatemala having come there after earthquakes and other natural disasters or just seeking employment and better work opportunities (M.C. Rendón, personal communication, October 13, 2015). Owing to a lack of economic possibilities, coupled with minimum education, the lawless ways of gangs, and drug lords, there has been a large exodus of young persons to the U.S. in the hopes of escaping death, prostitution, gratuitous violence and unbreakable bonds (M.C. Rendón, personal communication, October 13, 2015).

It is important to take all this into consideration when reflecting on the backgrounds of many of the Guatemalan and Central Americans entering our school system today. Given that work is more highly valued, and has traditionally been more productive than any schooling, many of the students we see come from families where money and the concrete is seen as more important than the intangible and not immediate benefits of learning (M.C. Rendón, personal communication, October 13, 2015). This backdrop is necessary to understand why immigrant youth are potential dropouts. The need to work outweighs the need to go to school as their financial contributions to the household is essential for survival (Lopez et al., 2001; Prewitt-Diaz et al., 1990). It is the aim
of this study to offer a portrait of how a high school in Massachusetts is working today with immigrant Guatemalan families and helping to incorporate them through the public system.

**Research Problem**

The lack of Latina/o parental involvement in education is often cited as a reason for poor Latina/o academic performance in schools (Ramírez, 2003; Valencia & Black, 2002). The label “family engagement” is a relatively recent performance measure in teacher evaluations systems today. The concept has been carved into a complex and rigid structural apparatus that is heavily shaped by race (Jasis & Ordanez-Jasis, 2004, Olivos & Quintanilla de Valladolid, 2005), institutional structures (de Carvalho, 2001; Delgado Gaitán, 1990; Jasis & Ordanez-Jasis, 2004), and political mandates that ignore the profound cultural intricacies of Latina/o families (Auerbach, 2002; de Carvalho, 2001; Grant & Potter, 2011; Lareau, 1987; Olivos, 2006). Such factors lack guidance for authentic engagement (Grant & Potter, 2011) and marginalize Latina/o families from creating a meaningful partnership with school members to ensure a fair education for their children (Delgado-Gaitán, 1991). Race, institutional structures, and federal mandates represent traditional constructs that prevent homes and schools to work both cooperatively and collaboratively (Grant & Potter, 2011; Delgado-Bernal, 2002; Delgado-Gaitán, 1991).

In terms of race, there are educators and administrators who have traditionally nurtured a “school-centric” approach to family engagement in public schools (Epstein, 2010). This means that school activities are structured and defined for parents, whose race, ethnicity, and class affiliations are subordinate to the dominant school group, by the school (Lawson, 2003). This leaves families with little power or impact on decision-making processes. The ingrained notions of what is acceptable and what is the norm in parent engagement does not allow for new concepts of empowerment that entail shared power, and co-leadership (Freire, 2014; Ladson-
Research on Latina/o parent engagement demonstrates that acknowledging and recognizing culture and language encourages parents to advocate for their children in schools (Delgado-Gaitan 2004, López, 2001). In parents’ desire to advocate for their children, educators must understand that Latina/o families respect and value education (deCarvalho 2001; Hill & Torres, 2010). Latina/o parents also foster education at home that goes unrecognized and unacknowledged at schools (Valdés, 1996). This presents differing views of education for Latina/o parents and educators. Critical to Latina/o parent engagement is a dialogue (Freire, 2014) at the table where educators and administrators understand that Latina/o parents care and advocate for the education of their children at home.

A second construct in the rigid apparatus family engagement finds itself in institutional structures. Latina/o families encounter limited interpretation services and stiff school hours to hold a conversation with a teacher or guidance counselor that prevents them from engaging in their child’s education. A deficit-oriented or “difference” perspective towards Latina/o students and families is also an obstacle to meaningful parent engagement (Fine, 1993; Schutz, 2006). The difference perspective acknowledges a dichotomy between home and school culture that places the student at a disadvantage and leaves little hope for substantial and significant change in school reform (Schutz, 2006). The difference or deficit model offers an explanation for the achievement gap based on an argument that parents are to blame for their children’s poor achievement and social upbringing (Valencia & Black, 2002). This creates policies and practices on family engagement intended to alter families’ behaviors and expectations to align better with that of educators (de Carvalho, 2001; Olivos et al., 2011).

An example of this is described by hooks (2003) who describes how educators teach their students of color as if they were incapable of achieving any level of excellence in their classes.
Black or Latina/o students who perceive that their teachers view them as incapable of performing well will under-perform, thus satisfying their teachers’ low expectations of them (hooks, 2003). Moreover, students of color are expected to come to class and assimilate the bourgeois norms of behavior and language and refrain from talking loudly or interrupting with, what educators perceive to be, “rude and threatening behavior” (hooks, 1994, p. 187). Such structural components ignore Latina/o students’ and families’ strengths and excludes them from opportunities (Delpit, 1995; Nieto, 2000; Olivos & Mendoza, 2010; Trueba, 1999; Valdés, 1996). Latina/o parents assume U.S. public educators will provide their children with equal opportunities to excel in school. Educators, administrators, and teachers, in fact, expect less of their students of color and their families (Nieto, 2000).

A third construct in the rigid apparatus that restrains Latina/o families from engaging with their schools is existing federal and local mandates on family engagement. Policies such as the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) or Joyce Epstein’s framework for family involvement do not represent the participation of all families. Both frameworks set the conditions for a parent-school partnership that reflect the values and beliefs of the White staff (Grant & Potter, 2011). Schools set the parameters for how all families “communicate,” “volunteer,” “learn at home,” “make decisions,” and collaborate with the community” (Grant & Potter, 2011). Lareau (1987) argued that parent involvement is more beneficial and accessible to parents of high economic status who mirror the culture of the school. Lying beneath the home-school relationship is an invisible imprint of society (Lareau, 1987, p. 74) that may ignore other families’ different sets of cultural resources (Lareau, 1987, p. 83). Federal and local policies on family engagement fail to recognize how cultural, social, and economic inequalities affect marginalized populations (Auerbach, 2007; Delgado-Gaitán, 1991; Lareau, 1989).
Family engagement is carved in a rigid apparatus shaped by race, policies / frameworks, and culture.

The aforementioned constructs are surrounded by a cultural context that further restricts the engagement of families coming from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. The understanding of culture cannot be reduced to just food, music, and festivities. Sonia Nieto (2008) defines culture as “the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldviews shared by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and/or religion” (p. 129). Within this definition, culture is fluid and represents a hybrid of multiple influences. While this study is guided by Nieto’s definition, it is also informed by the fact that the dominant school culture sends off subtle and implicit messages to minority cultures that they do not belong (Shields, 2004).

Educational institutions tend to exercise cultural marginalization, therefore perpetuating inequalities in their curricula. McLaren (2003) argued that knowledge is socially constructed by
the dominant culture. The dominant culture projects itself as the host country that represents civility and rationality (Estrada & McLaren, 1993). It creates an invisible boundary separating the us from the others. In schools, the dominant culture leaves no window cracked open for new cultures to seep in and introduce a new system of values, practices, and beliefs in its educational institutions. Therefore, cross-border realities are not allowed to contest Euro-American structural practices (Estrada & McLaren, 1993). Nieto (2008) argued that school curricula and pedagogy perpetuate a status quo, cementing entitlement privileges to some families more than to others (Yosso, 2002, 2005). Differing perspectives and a refusal to respect other norms results in cultural opposition among educators, administrators, students, and parents (Estrada, 1993).

Culture and oppositional cultures in educational institutions unmask power-relations and how Communities of Color connect with their schools (Nieto, 2008). Low-income families of color experience fear and confusion when interacting with educators in the dominant culture. Not only is language a barrier, but, more often than not, low-income families do not have the courage to question figures with authority or ask to be given the respect they deserve (Freire, 2014). Furthermore, communication breakdown occurs when families of color do not understand the codes or rules necessary to navigate the dominant culture (Delpit, 1995). These codes or rules are not limited to linguistic competencies. Delpit (1995) pointed out that the “presentation of self, that is, ways of talking, writing, dressing, and ways of interacting” are implicit in the dominant culture (p. 26). Delpit (1988) presented a debate over how skills-oriented versus process-oriented writing affected African-American and poor children’s performance in school. White middle-class children benefitted from both approaches because their discourse patterns and values aligned with that of the educational system. However, students of color did not possess
this cultural capital and, consequently, struggled because they had to learn new codes and new values that were inherent in the activities.

Picking up on and exercising these codes facilitates academic achievement and positive social relationships. This is difficult for families whose needs and cultures are not recognized by the dominant culture (Delgado-Gaitán, 2004; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). The knowledge Latina/o parents need to negotiate and navigate the school system is culturally bound (Delgado-Gaitán, 2014). Failure to recognize the cultural and linguistic diversity of families of color helps to alienate them from establishing a relationship with educators and participating in schools (Delgado-Gaitán, 1991).

Schools and homes have invisible cultures (Delpit, 1995). As entities of power, educational institutions in the US have a moral and legal responsibility to connect with all home environments to ensure academic achievement and success for their students. Educational leaders need to revise their ethics of fostering dialogues on difference with families of color so that their curricula recognizes individual identities (Pinar, 1992) and enhances everyone’s educational mobility (Kelly, 1993). As it stands, parental disengagement exists. The research problem addressed in this study is that institutional structures and federal mandates enveloped in a school culture perpetuate hidden conditions that prevent families, particular Latina/o parents from engaging with their school.

Purpose

This study is designed to illustrate the experiences of immigrant Guatemalan parents who have children in a high school. The study’s goal is to analyze the lived-stories of parents as personal, detailed accounts while simultaneously offering a new viewpoint on family engagement. The findings of this research will be shared with all educators and staff at my
school district. In addition, this study will provide recommendations to engage families in meaningful conversations linked to student academic achievement.

**Justification for the Research Problem**

Parental involvement has a positive impact on student school achievement (Epstein, 1987; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2007; Mapp, 2003). Regardless of the families’ socio-economic status, their ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds affect the education of their children (Jeynes, 2007). Misinterpretations and false assumptions often build barriers for Latina/o parents. However, Delgado-Gaitán (1985) demonstrated that parents do care and are aware of the education of their child. Low-income parents are more apt to become involved when the school invites them to participate, when their perspectives are valued, and when they are addressed in culturally appropriate ways (Delgado-Gaitán, 2007; Epstein, 1990; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Mapp, 2003). Researchers have also noted the limitation of schools that follow a traditional approach to family engagement and marginalize parents of color and low-income parents (Orozco, 2008; Auerbach, 2002). This research discusses the need to reconcile the contradictions that exist in parents’ engagement in the education of their children by focusing on counter-stories.

**Deficiencies in the Evidence**

Although Latin American countries speak Spanish, there is heterogeneity of people’s knowledge, languages, and cultures. These differences distinguish Latinas/os from Euro-American culture and identities (Jiménez Estrada, 2012) and bond these nations on their shared history of colonization, Western hegemony, exploitation, and marginality. Furthermore, the term connects Latin Americans in their shared hope, dreams, and desire for “a just and balanced world” (Jiménez Estrada, 2012, p. 62). Despite these commonalities, nuances among Latin
American nations exist. This study will focus on immigrant Guatemalans and how they understand the education of their children.

There is little research surrounding the Guatemalan perspective in the education of Latinas/os and even less in family engagement. Hill and Torres (2010) noted that more than half of existing literature on parental involvement in education centers on families of Mexican descent, followed by research on families of Puerto Rican or Dominican Republic descent. Hardly any studies have focused on immigrant Guatemalan parents and caregivers with the goal of exploring their lived experiences in public high schools.

**Positionality Statement**

Key aspects of my life shape my identity and are the roots of my work and my research. Three aspects stem primarily from my profession as an educator and my current position as a family and community engagement specialist. First, my training in graduate school as well as years of experience as curriculum designer, educational leader, and classroom teacher at a Catalan public university and a private Catalan school has had an impact on how I view cultures and languages. While in Catalonia, I worked in language curricula; I studied syllabi, methodologies, and learning outcomes. I learned how to visualize the relationship between these elements, and I saw how they impacted teaching and learning in a language classroom. In addition, I learned from Europeans the significance and value of knowing a foreign language. While a graduate student, I studied second language acquisition with educators who placed great importance on sociolinguistics, educational policy, and diversity. Applied to my present role as family engagement specialist, this past experience equipped me with the sensitivity to understand how languages are learned and conserved. In addition, my past experiences have given me the skills to be critical of how communities interact with peoples’ language and culture.
A second experience involves living in Catalonia where I experienced what it was like to have to accept and speak the official language of a region of a country in order to be given access to a good job and engage in meaningful dialogues with others. The political, social, and cultural undertones of the Catalan language were omnipresent and often created barriers for me to access multiple opportunities. During this period of my life, I experienced a shift of identity. I had arrived to Catalonia from a monolingual society believing that I could establish relationships with others speaking my native language, Spanish. However, I saw how the strength of the local language identified me along with others as a minority.

My third experience in family-school relationships is working as a family and community engagement specialist at a public high school located in the northeast of the country. My professional context is a comprehensive public high school serving 1,389 students. The teachers are predominantly monolingual, female, and white. They service a student population whose demographic is diverse. While there are 53 different languages spoken at home by English learners (EL), Spanish is the dominant language. Latino students in my context are no different from other Latino students in high schools across the nation. They lag behind non-Hispanic students in their academic performance (Gándara & Contreras, 2009) and they constitute a large portion of our dropout students. I was hired to help Latino students graduate from high school. In my conversations with students, I began to also converse with their parents and caregivers. In my interactions with Latino parents, I have observed and listened to their concerns about a number of issues that range from not speaking and understanding English, advocating for their troubled children in school, addressing their immigration status, and failing to understand how they can help their children be college or career ready, among other issues. When teachers at my high school work with Latino parents, I have observed that misunderstandings stem from not being
familiar with both the linguistic and cultural background of Latino families and their daily realities. These misunderstandings become barriers.

There lies an additional dimension to my identity that contributes to my multi-faceted self and contributes to my interest in being a family and community engagement specialist at my high school. Like the majority of parents who live in my working community, I too am Guatemalan. I was born and grew up in Guatemala City in the 1960s. I spent many weekends with Ignacia, my caretaker and her family, to help out in the fields early in the morning or to carry baskets of dirty clothing to the river for a cleaning. Upper and middle-class Guatemalans in my neighborhood called people like Ignacia India, meaning slow, ignorant, and socially inept. My father was political in his views and actions when addressing the rights of the Guatemalan Indio and this forced us out of the country.

We resettled in an American suburb, asking Ignacia if she wanted to come with us. Although we left Guatemala, the country never left us. Guatemalan men immigrating to the U.S. would arrive at our home on a monthly basis for a meal, a shower, and a clean bed to spend the night before moving onwards to a destination up north. Over time these Guatemalans have been called wetbacks, cheap labor, car thieves, dirty immigrants, and illegals. To avoid these slurs reaching Ignacia, my sisters and I spent evenings after dinner teaching her English and eventually making her an American citizen.

**Positionality and bias.** These experiences and knowledge are tightly interrelated and construct my social identity. I am a cross-border woman. I was born in Guatemala, I grew up in a mid-Atlantic state of the U.S., I lived in the madre patria, the motherland of Latin America, and I have returned to the U.S. The transition from one border to the next has influenced my daily habits of interacting with others, which is strongly defined by language and culture. This
experience influences how I interact with Latina/o parents and their children as well as with school educators. Similarly, my experience and knowledge influences how others engage with me.

My discussion on Latina/o student retention with Latina/o parents, on Latina/o students and educators has uncovered full descriptions that include values, thoughts, feelings, intentionalities, and experiences that render singular meanings of my practice. In my attempt to recognize each experience as fresh and open, I need to adhere to a systematic and disciplined methodology to understand how everyone’s knowledge and experiences are connected to my phenomenon.

Positionality acknowledges how my race, gender, socioeconomic status as well as my cultural and linguistic background creates a bias within my research (Parsons, 2008). As a Latina, middle-class, and educator researcher, it is a struggle for me to refrain from imposing on Latina/o parents and their children what I believe to be their needs. It is easy to fall into a deficit perspective when interacting with immigrant Latina/o parents. Yet, I value the resources Latinas/os have in their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. I respect their identity based on their home language as well as their definition of educación. I am also cognizant of learning foreign languages and what it means to be fearful of communicating with others. I know the social, political, and cultural implications of speaking or not speaking the dominant language of a country. All these dimensions of my positionality enable me to contribute to research on Latina/o immigrant parent participation in public schools. Sharing my knowledge and experiences with educators, Latina/o parents and their children can be a new source of empowerment and opportunities.
**Research Central Question**

The overarching research questions in this study was as follows:

How do immigrant Guatemalan families who have children in a northeastern high school make sense of their children’s education?

The sub questions are as follows:

- How does racism shape the experiences of Guatemalan parents/families at my high school?
- How do Guatemalan families use their cultural capital in schools?
- How does the high school empower Guatemalan families?

**Theoretical Frameworks**

Family engagement in educational settings is complex. Culture, existing frameworks, and policies to engage families in school systems account for neither the differences in languages nor the socio-political and cultural backgrounds that exist in multiple households in the American landscape. There is a misconception that low-income and marginalized families do not care or are not supportive of their children’s education, based on deficit notions that ignore the cultural wealth families bring with them (Veléz-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). To make sense of this complex situation, two theoretical frameworks guide this study: Critical Race Theory and Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit). The concept Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) is also presented to address the cultural capital Latina/o parents possess. Finally, Paulo Freire’s Critical Pedagogy helps to frame a discussion of empowerment.

**Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit) are frameworks that examine the experiences and intentions of people of color. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a
theoretical paradigm with origins in law. Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Gloria Ladson-Billings are contemporary critical race theorists who argue that critical legal studies have failed to recognize the lived histories and experiences of people of color (Yosso, 2006). CRT scholars are interested in studying and transforming the relationship between race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). These scholars place race at the center of critical analysis to challenge long-standing legal policies that favored particular groups in America’s society and culture (Ladson-Billings, 1999). “Interest convergence,” a term coined by Bell, argues that a majoritarian group in society has little incentives to eradicate racism and will act upon it only when it affects their self-interests (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Solórzano and Yosso (2001) identified five tenets of Critical Race Theory and LatCrit: 1) the centrality of race and racism, 2) the challenge to dominant ideology, 3) the commitment to social justice, 4) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and 5) the transdisciplinary perspective. These tenets, either independently or collectively, appear in CRT research that seek to understand issues of racism, equality, empowerment, and social justice. This study focuses on the tenet of the centrality of experiential knowledge, also known as storytelling.

**The centrality of race and racism.** When race and racism are discussed in the United States, one is reminded of the injustices Afro-Americans suffered in the 1960s. The Latino/a experience in the U.S. is racialized and shares elements of the Afro-American history. Although segments of society may claim that race is no longer prevalent, Bonilla-Silva (2003) argues that color-blind racism exists as a racial ideology that excuses Whites from any form of racial inequality. Bonilla-Silva states, “Shielded by color blindness, whites can express resentment toward minorities, criticize their morality, values, and work ethic; and even claim to be the victims of reverse racism.”
Race and racism “are embedded in the structures, practices, and discourses that guide the daily practices” of institutions (Taylor, 1999 as cited by Solórzano et al., 2005, p. 274). For Latinos, however, racism is present in many other aspects. Immigrant Latino parents/caregivers do not speak English well enough to advocate for their children in a school system that is unfamiliar to them. Generally speaking, their children are placed into an English as a Second Language program (ESL) to acquire sufficient language skills to enter the mainstream curriculum. Unfortunately, many English language learners (ELL) remain in an ESL program longer than the federal government stipulates and at the comfort of the teachers. The ramifications of remaining stagnant in an ESL program are profound. ELL students do not receive the material or guidance to “catch up” to be readmitted to regular classes (Cammarota, 2006). Unfortunately, the Latino student’s family does not understand the extent to which an ELL program differs from the general program. The family is unaware that critical thinking skills and a grade point average (GPA) are absent in an ESL curriculum. This racial disparity in educational achievement is rationalized through cultural deficit theories (Valencia & Solórzano, 1997) that blame families for their children’s poor attitudes and behaviors (Noguera, 2008) and for not valuing the education of their children (Valdés, 1996, Auerbach, 2001, Gándara, 1999).

**The challenge to dominant ideology.** According to Solórzano and Yosso (2001), this tenet challenges educational institutions to provide all students with equal access to opportunities and challenges systems of colorblindness, race neutrality, and objectivity. CRT and LatCrit scholars challenge the notions of neutrality and objectivity in order to expose deficit tendencies that silence, ignore, and distort the Latina/o experience along with those of students of color (Delgado Bernal, 1998; Yosso, 2006). LatCrit challenges the deficit views of Guatemalan parent engagement that fail to recognize how the linguistically and cultural diversity of immigrant
Latina/o families are already participating in the education of their children (Delgado-Gaitán, 1994, Valdés, 1996). CRT provides “meaning to the creation of culturally and linguistically relevant ways of knowing and understanding and to the importance of rethinking the traditional notion of what counts as knowledge” (Bernal, 2002, p. 109).

**Commitment to social justice.** CRT and LatCrit in education are eliminating race, class, gender, and other intersecting forms of oppression that all people of color encounter (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, 2001a). Through political and social change with and for communities of color, individuals can be empowered to contest racism, sexism, and inequality (Freire, 2014; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001b). Schools can function as political spaces where a “banking” notion of education serves the interests of the dominant group or schools can operate by a problem-posing approach that transforms its diverse communities to be democratically active in sustaining dignity and respect for all (Freire, 2014). Schools can operate in contradictory ways whereby some may be subordinated and marginalized while others are empowered (Yosso, 2002). Guatemalan families challenge many layers of oppression and discrimination with what Solórzano and Delgado Bernal (2001) recognized as multiple forms of resistance. This study will explore how their stories challenge the dominant ideology.

**The centrality of experiential knowledge.** CRT and LatCrit recognize that storytelling, family histories, narratives, cuentos, and testimonios “are legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination” (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 26). Experiential knowledge accepts storytelling as valid stories that unmask and expose inequities present in the majoritarian story (Elenes & Delgado Bernal, 2010). It allows for minority voices to name their reality, to express a different interpretation on legal discourse (Delgado as cited in Ladson-Billing, 1999) and to unveil racial injustices (Ladson-Billings,
Storytelling focuses on the collective narration of marginalized populations who tell their stories of conflict, tensions, and oppression in relation to race and the legal system (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

The *testimonio*, a counterstory methodology, seeks to hear the stories often not heard or listened to that can challenge the stories of those in power (Elenes & Delgado Bernal, 2010; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). *Testimonios* are not only a tool for challenging the status quo, they are also a tool of empowerment (Valdés, 1996; Auerbach, 2002). Individuals who contribute to *testimonios* form a collective truth that is recognized and valued to raising awareness (Valencia & Solórzano, 1997). *Testimonios* are powerful resources that build communities and pierce new realities into long-standing stories. *Testimonios* in this study will allow for immigrant Guatemalan parents to share their experiential knowledge and validate their realities (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

Storytelling can have three implications. First, the stories of individuals create and define a social reality to transform an existing system (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). They disclose how structures are interpreted by and imposed by others, while legitimizing the subordinated experiences of others (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1999). Second, storytelling shields disenfranchised groups and helps them better understand their own values and needs. Marginalized groups are conscious of how society views them. Storytelling becomes a cathartic process by which individuals gain strength to acknowledge their own realities and build a community (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Third, stories told by minorities challenge the storytelling of the dominant White group that may have forgotten the immigrant experience in their own story.
**The transdisciplinary perspective.** Solórzano and Yosso (2002) argue this tenet “challenges ahistoricism and the unidisciplinary focus of most analysis and insists on analyzing race and racism by placing them in both an historical and contemporary context” (p.26). In education, CRT and LatCrit rely on a knowledge coming from sociology, history, law, ethnic studies, and women’s studies among other fields. These multiple influences allow for a broader understanding of racism, sexism and classism in education. An historical approach towards parent engagement in American schools reveals preferential treatment Anglo-Saxon families have received in policies and frameworks that align with common normatives of the dominant group. For Guatemalan families, this analysis would uncover the discriminatory treatment they have been subjected to as family engagement policies and frameworks are exclusionary to families with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Auerbach, 2001).

**Latina/o Critical Theory**

Valdés (1996 as cited in Delgado-Bernal, 2002) claimed LatCrit to be a “cousin” to CRT as it embraces an anti-subordination position. LatCrit expands the analysis of race to include culture, language, immigration status, ethnicity, and sexuality. As a theory, LatCrit “elucidates Latinas/Latinos’ multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism and other forms of oppression” (Delgado-Bernal, 2002, p. 108). Other forms of oppression can include nativism and monolingualism (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). The significance of CRT and LatCrit in this study is to examine the intersection between the US and Latina/o educational realm to gain a new understanding of how immigrant Guatemalan families are affected by multiple forms of educational structural subordination.
Community Cultural Wealth (CCW)

A model that asserts and respects the strengths of culturally diverse families is Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) (Yosso, 2005). This model recognizes that families of color possess a knowledge built on their experiences. This can be found in their cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities. CCW contests a generalized idea people have that low-income and immigrant families do not have culture. The dominant culture does not recognize or value funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) that marginalized communities recognize and often resort to. CCW is comprised of six elements that include the following capitals: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant.

1. Aspirational capital refers to the goals and wishes parents have for their children to be successful in school. Although Guatemalans have the lowest educational outcomes compared to other Latinas/os (Fry, 2014), parents maintain high aspirations for their children’s future (Auerbach, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Gándara, 1995).

2. Linguistic capital refers to Latino/a students to building on their native language to learn a second language. This aspect values bilingual education and stresses the connections between racialized cultural history and language (Yosso, 2005).

3. Familial capital refers cultural and linguistic codes and knowledge that define a community and its history. It is a “cultural intuition” (Delgado Bernal, 1998) that unites Latinas/os and extends the composition of the immediate family to include grandparents, aunts, uncles, and friends. In my study, familial capital is supported by the extended family. Older siblings, an aunt or an uncle or a family friend represent an absent parent.
4. Social capital refers to a network of people and resources who can provide emotional, spiritual, and friendship support.

5. Navigational capital refers to the ability to maneuver through institutions. American public schools can hold hostile and exclusionary practices and policies where Latina/o families need to resort to strategies to navigate the system. Immigrant Guatemalan parents often face a lack of transportation and childcare or hold two jobs that prevent them from attending a school event or meeting with a teacher. Yet, they find ways to meet with a teacher or attend a school event in order that their child does not run the risk of failing or dropping out (Auerbach, 2001).

6. Resistant capital refers to Latinos/as historical experience of having been colonized and having cultivated the skills and knowledge to challenge the dominant group (Yosso, 2005; Freire, 2014; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Giroux (1986) states that people resist mechanism of domination through an endurance that is linked to forms of knowledge. Immigrant Guatemalan guardians encounter and overcome challenges of deficit thinking by teachers and administrators by finding assistance from a family engagement officer or being persistent (Hernández, 2012).

Yosso (2005) encouraged school members to shift their practice from deficit views to acknowledge the cultural wealth of disenfranchised families. Yosso (2005) argued educators must find ways to respect cultures to build and strengthen connections with homes. Building this strong partnership requires educators and communities of color to learn about each other’s norms, languages, expectations, and attitudes towards education (Delgado-Gaitán, 2001). CCW
is a powerful lens to understand the strengths Latina/o immigrant parents have. If school members can recognize, respect, and value different cultural capitals then they can transform their practices to improve the learning of our historically marginalized students.

**Critical Pedagogy**

Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2014) provided a lens for deconstructing oppression and creating liberatory practices. Freire posited that not until the oppressed think critically about their context will they experience the transformational process *conscientização* — the process to gain critical consciousness. In his book, Freire provided educators with a pedagogy to create socially just societies by participating in a process to dismantle oppression. Empowerment is a result of this pedagogy. Empowerment draws upon and weaves together three strands that frame this study: dialogue, problem-posing, and conscientization.

The first strand examines critical consciousness defined as the apprehension of complex social, economic, and political contradictions that the oppressed need to contest (Freire, 2014). This can be accomplished through the process of dialoguing. More concretely, a critical dialogue identifies cultural or political themes that have relevancy in the peoples’ lives. These themes become the basis for a dialogue that is seriously reflected and acted upon by the oppressed to transform their context. Freire (2014) called this critical and liberating dialogue *praxis*. *Praxis* is achieved by trusting in the oppressed who are capable of dialoguing, reflecting, and dismantling the social injustices they face. Moreover, for the dialogue to be liberatory it must be nourished by and rooted in love. It is only through love that true solidarity among people can be found. Dialogue also requires humility in recognizing one’s reality, faith in people, and hope. These values allow for a dialogue to establish a reciprocal relationship in which a mutual trust exists among the dialoguers.
A second strand in empowerment is the notion that educational institutions are political and, consequently, not neutral spaces (Solórzano, 1989). Schools reproduce the existing culture by socializing students into acknowledging the values and ideology of the dominant group. Freire called for the “banking” notion of education to be replaced with a critical dialogical approach in teaching and learning environments. The “banking” method in education views teachers as depositing knowledge into students’ minds, much like we deposit money into a bank account. In this method, students are seen as passive receptacles that unconditionally accept the social, cultural, and economic values of the dominant culture. A narrative relationship is established between the teacher and student whereby communication in the classroom occurs in only one direction. The educator is positioned as superior while the student is dependent on the teacher for the acquisition of knowledge. Through a classroom monologue, the educator encourages passivity and perpetuates the values of a dominant social class.

Freire argued for consciousness-raising whereby teachers purposefully problematize differing contexts, engaging students to explore and discover their own reality. Problem-posing education shifts the traditional role of teacher and student to “the teacher [who] is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach” (Freire, 2014, p.80). In other words, a problem-posing model provides opportunities to recognize knowledge as dynamic, not static, and transformational. A problem-posed model recognizes and respects the co-existence of different worldviews.

Freire asserted that everyone learns from each other. Embedded in this claim is consciousness, a third strand in empowerment. Consciousness is a result of an awareness of peoples’ concrete experience in their lived world and their decision to acknowledge if this reality is suitable to them or not. If not, the disenfranchised group can begin to address their
marginalization and work towards altering power relations with their oppressor. This is done by facilitating a sense of community for silenced individuals to voice their shared experiences, concerns, problems, and dreams in a narrative.

**Freire’s critical pedagogy and the context of my research.** A critical pedagogy based on dialogue, a problem-solving model, and collective action is important to frame this study (see Figure II). The Finish Strong Latina/o Leadership Workshop sets a pathway toward an authentic praxis in which trust allows for a fluid two-way conversation between families and myself and my colleagues. In adhering to steps that lead to conscientization as a liberatory method, the Finish Strong Latina/o Leadership Workshop allows Latina/o families to form a community and collectively make meaning of their social, cultural, and political problems. A problem-based model is followed in my Workshops whereby I invite educators and administrators to present their respective curricula to families with the intention of (1) learning how to navigate and (2) understanding who is being served by the educational system. Through activities Latina/o families engage in dialogue that informs and clarifies their worldview within the American school system. By recognizing these different realities, Latina/o families begin to contest long-standing structures of power in the educational system. My Workshops provide a space for Latina/o families to engage in critical dialogue that can propel the parents to become agents of change and transform educational practices they hope to see for their community.
**Summary**

CRT/LatCrit, CCW model, and Freirean Critical Pedagogy are theoretical perspectives informing this study. CRT/LatCrit marks an analytical frame in which to understand the experiences of Latina/o parents in a US school system that has historically used concepts of equity and fairness to imply that all students have access to quality educational opportunities. Specifically, LatCrit sets a frame to explore how the level of engagement of immigrant Guatemalan parents at a high school is impacted by structural practices and policies. Building on the notion of funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992), Yosso (2005) challenged the prejudices towards communities of color. Her model of CCW shifts the deficiency mindset to one of assets people of color value. These assets are often invisible to the mainstream culture and constitute a form of knowledge. The model serves as a tool to plunge forward towards social and racial justice, requiring a re-structuring of the public educational system around Latinas/os multiple skills and capital.
Freire’s (2014) Critical Pedagogy provides a backdrop to understand how individuals become empowered. The pedagogy of oppression highlights the complexities of subordination found in structures, policies, and frameworks; and, the impact these have on the consciousness of people who encounter them. Freire’s perspective also illuminates the agency and strength disenfranchised communities possess to engage in a dialogic praxis that can lead to their empowerment and a transformation of long-standing structures.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviewed federal laws and research regarding family engagement in education. A primary intention was to examine how policy and research identify and emphasize parents or caregivers as critical educators. From this understanding, the review of the literature became more nuanced in exploring Latina/o parents as school partners. Latina/o parents’ participation in the education of their children is the kernel of this dissertation, wherein there is a special emphasis on the voices of ethnic Latinos, such as that of Guatemalan immigrants, who are often not heard in the K-12 educational system. This silence may explain why Latina/o Guatemalan parents feel uncomfortable and disempowered from establishing working relationships with school educators. The review explored challenges Latina/o parents encountered as newly arrived parents.

This review of literature was articulated in three sections. The first section focused on how policy and research on family engagement defined parents’ interactions and experiences with school staff, be they teachers and/or administrators. Included in this section is the need to re-define “family.” In the second section, educational inequalities in family-school partnerships were explored in light of the power of institutional racism. (Counter) storytelling was also examined. The third section addressed cultural capital in schools and Latina/o immigrant parents’ engagement.

Family engagement as defined by federal law

The earliest reference to a family and school partnership can be found during Lyndon Johnson’s administration’s address to poverty in his War on Poverty programs (Menken, 2010). In 1965, President Johnson signed Section 201 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) acknowledging the need for government to assist low-income families in the education
of their children. As an extension to Lyndon Johnson’s ESEA of 1965, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 addresses the unsatisfactory academic outcome of students in K-12 schools, where low-income and immigrant students continue to face difficulties and be out-performed by their mainstream or privileged peers. Stemming from the NCLB are accountability systems that hold schools accountable for improving student achievement based on academic outcome for subgroups while increasing the academic achievement for all students.

In an effort to have every student succeed, the NCLB Act (2001) requires schools to collaboratively work with families to support their children’s education. The NCLB Act offers the greatest elaboration on family involvement in schools as well as district and school responsibilities toward working with parents. The law defines parent involvement as

the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring: (1) the parents play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning; (2) that parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school; (3) that parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and (4) that other activities are carried out, such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA.

(U.S. Department, 2004)

This official definition frames family engagement as one that revolves around school activities and which take place within the school campus. No reference is made to exploring and incorporating alternative practices which extend to the broader spheres of home and community. Owing to language barriers, demanding work schedules, and lack of private transportation, many immigrant parents are unable to participate more wholly in their children’s academic development (Peña, 2000). The established avenues of advisory committees, PTA meetings, and
academic and social events are not within their possibilities, or else set challenges that immigrant parents are unfamiliar with (Peña, 2000; Valdés, 1996). Just as immigrant parents’ English language abilities are limited likewise is their ability to navigate through the system owing to their minimal understanding of “how things work,” especially in public schools (Menken, 2010; Valdés, 1996). This affects the full integration of their children into the system and, ultimately, their academic success and possibilities (Menken, 2010).

The NCLB Act (2001) positions immigrant parents, whose home language and rudimentary knowledge of English limits their interaction with educators or participation in school affairs, as a problem for student success (Valencia, 2010). On the whole, few allowances are made for parents of limited English proficiency (LEP) students and this creates an impasse which not only puts students at a disadvantage, but parents as well (Valencia, 2010). The law expects that in order for students to succeed academically, particularly those students whose native language is not English, they and their parents must master English fast enough in order to navigate the mainstream school model, be totally at home with the American system of social interaction, and perform well on standardized testing (Menken, 2010). There is no doubt that knowledge and use of the English language is critical to student academic success (Menken, 2010).

The NCLB Act (2001) prescribes behaviors that best describe and fit the traditional and formal habit and values of middle-class American families (Lareau, 1989; López et. al, 2001; Valdés, 1996; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999), which is a completely different demographic than that which inhabits our schools. Education has always been a rite of passage with its traditions (Altbach, 2010). In the case of our educational system, Doucette (2011) has identified these behaviors as a series of “performance of rituals” that serve as a “criterion for group inclusion or
exclusion” (p. 404). Rituals in parent engagement socialize parents to understand the cultural expectations of the school, regarding their roles in the education of their children (Doucette, 2011). This may include following traditional forms of parental engagement that includes holding meaningful dialogues with educators, attending teacher conferences, or back-to-school nights. Ritualized practices, as discussed by Doucette (2011) define the group identity of mainstream parents and linguistically, culturally, and socioeconomically diverse (LCSD) families. Implicitly, parents are inadvertently following larger societal messages about gender, race, and class that distinguish mainstream parents from marginalized parents (Doucette, 2011). Families who deviate from prescribed rituals of parent engagement are considered lacking (Olivos et al., 2011).

A need to re-define family

Federal regulation on family involvement holds an implicit assumption that immigrant families lack certain skills or knowledge (López et al., 2001). The home culture of Latina/o students fails to support their academic achievement in the American public school system (Valdés, 1996). Policy privileges middle-class forms of parental involvement (López et al., 2001), creating a structure of dominance that establishes an asymmetrical relationship with immigrant parents. Policy functions under a deficit perspective, illuminating Latina/o families’ differences with the majority culture (Olivos & Quintana de Valladolid, 2005). By virtue of the race, class, culture, language, and status, Latina/o immigrant parents are disempowered by a dominant social group that favors the prevalent social and educational system (Nuñez, 1994). Consequently, a unidirectional approach to parental involvement exists that marginalizes Latina/o families, creating tensions and barriers to fuller school involvement (López, 2004).
Henderson and Mapp (2002) argue for policy makers to be critical of their definition of family engagement, so that their sphere of influence converges with that of the diverse parents. Moreover, when examining Latina/o family engagement, the analysis needs to include the extended family and community providers (Hidalgo, 1988). The Latina/o family model extends to grandparents, aunts, uncles as well as additional extended members who need to be seen as strong cultural resources to educators. Grandparents, in particular, are highly respected in Latina/o families and serve as caretakers and role models for children (Carrasquillo, 1991; Rodriguez, 1999). There is also the *compadre* (godparent) who in the absence of the parent(s) takes on the status of the child's relative to protect and provide for the child (Marín & Marín, 1991). Unlike the American family unit that consists of a parent or two and their children, the Latina/o family includes the family, the *compadre(s)*, relatives who live in the house or in the community or in the city or in the country or outside the country (Carrasquillo, 1991). The Latina/o family relies on this extended community and places a high regard to relationships that ties them together (Delgado-Gaitán, 2004). These strong ties can best be understood as inherent strengths or “funds of knowledge” (Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992) that define a Latina/o family.

**Family engagement as defined by research**

Following the established legal parameters of what is required of our educational system, research also contributes to the definition of family involvement. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) model along with Joyce Epstein’s (1995) model on family engagement are significant frameworks that mark much of the research in the literature. Because this study is designed to explore how immigrant Guatemalan families are involved in their children’s education, it focused on Epstein’s research. The work of Joyce Epstein, the foremost researcher
in this field and author of Theory of Overlapping Spheres of Influence (1995, 2010), addressed home-school-community relations. Epstein recognized the benefits of a family-school-community partnership as it could “improve school programs and school climate, provide family services and support, increase families’ skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and in the community, and help teachers with their work” (Epstein, 1995, p. 82). The family-school-community partnership flourished when school, family, and community members collaborated to nurture the child’s learning, growth, and well-being.

Epstein (1995, 2010) argued that when the spheres of influence were pushed to overlap, an area of partnership between the home and the school created opportunities for stakeholders to share their experiences to enhance the lives of children. Similarly, when the spheres were pushed apart, activities in the school and home remained independent and separate (Epstein, 1995, 2010). Critical to Epstein’s theory was the child who stood at the center of the home-school partnership which aimed to “engage, guide, energize, and motivate students to produce their own success” (Epstein, 1995, p. 82). From the spheres of influence, Epstein (1995, 2010) developed six types of parental involvement, which defined and broke down practices to fully describe the home-school-community partnerships. The six-types of parent involvement, as defined by Epstein (1995, 2010), include:

- **Type 1 Parenting**: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students;
- **Type 2 Communicating with the school**: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress;
- **Type 3 Volunteering**: Recruit and organize parent help and support;
Type 4 Learning at Home: Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning;

Type 5 Decision-making: Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives, and

Type 6 Collaborating with the community: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

Epstein (2005) argued that when parents were engaged in their children’s education, both at home and at school, there was a better chance for their children to academically succeed and improve in social behavior (Epstein 2010; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Although this model is useful in Epstein’s (2010) National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS), a nationwide initiative to enhance dialogues between parents, schools and community members, Henderson & Mapp (2002) noted that at the high school level, communicating with the school, volunteering, and attending school events had little impact on student achievement.

Ingram, Wolfe and Lieberman (2007) used all six typologies in their study of three Chicago public schools characterized by their high levels of poverty level, large number of minority students, and high test scores on standardized exams. The three public schools were effective in working with their at-risk students. Ingram et al. (2007) sought to apply Epstein’s model in their schools’ context to construct an effective parent outreach program. They found parenting and learning at home to be the most common practices of parent involvement at the schools.

Based on the open-ended questions on the research survey, Ingram et al. (2007) found that parents participated in parenting activities such as providing a home environment that promoted
learning and good behavior. At home, the parents were encouraging, motivating, assisting, guiding, teaching morals and values, praising and loving. The authors identified three additional roles not considered in Epstein’s six typologies: having high expectations, teaching the importance of a good education, and providing the best education possible (p. 488). This suggested that all six types of family involvement do not correlate with the intended outcomes (Ingram et. al., 2007).

Indeed, a great deal of education occurs in the home with parents. In the case of immigrant families, this is where cultural capital is transmitted (Valdés, 1966). Learning at Home (Type 4) plays a significant role in student academic success and changes from middle to high school (Cooper et al., 2005). Auerbach (2007) criticized Epstein’s model for its assumptions on shared goals between parents and teachers. Epstein’s (1995) framework stressed mainstream parent involvement, neglecting to acknowledge how culturally diverse families’ practice can and do reflect their involvement in the education of their children.

In her qualitative study of Latino parents, Auerbach (2007) expanded the existing discourse on parent engagement in two areas. First, she examined how low-income parents felt when supporting their college-bound students. Second, she examined the cultural intentions behind parents’ actions. Auerbach stated that unlike parents of a high socioeconomic status who resorted to economic, social, and cultural capital, the working-class parents she studies drew on their moral, navigational, and emotional capital to support their children. These invisible strategies go unnoticed by educators who assume low socioeconomic Latino parents do not care about their children’s schooling. Auerbach encouraged leaders to re-examine their “value-laden, traditional, middle-class definition” (p. 278) of what parent involvement was to examine los apoyos, the supports, Latino parents afford their college-and career-bound students.
There is empirical evidence to suggest that student academic achievement is related to family-school partnerships (Epstein, 1995, 2010, Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Catsambis (2001) studied a nationally representative group of students in the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) to report that, across social class and ethnic groups, parental practice of encouragement and high educational expectation was important to seniors in high school preparing to go to college. Likewise, Fan & Chen (2001) found that the greatest predictors of children’s academic achievement was their parents’ aspirations and expectations as expressed in the home. Missing from this extant research, however, is how ethnic immigrant families teach their high school children at home and how their interactions with their children can add a new typology in Epstein’s (2010) framework. Latina/o parent engagement practices at the secondary school level are not yet well understood (Moreno, et al., 2011; Ryan et al., 2010).

Summary

While the NCLB Act (2002) is positive in that it acknowledges long-standing inequalities (Darling-Hammond, 2010), it lacks culturally and linguistically embedded strategies to embrace the largest and fastest growing minority population in the U.S. (Hill & Torres, 2010; López & Stanton-Salazar, 2001). This mandate while well-meaning perhaps has not been completely thought through given the complex social fabric of the families it seeks to incorporate. As in many cases, it is not simply a matter of “one size fits all,” but rather one of greater complexity. Furthermore, even within nationalities there are jarring differences that need to be taken into account. Recent historical factors must also be taken into consideration as these might be affecting the collective psyche of a group. This includes recognizing populations as victims of war, of racism within their countries of origin, further compounded by ambivalent attitudes with the United States that combine rejection and dislike. For this reason, it is essential
to understand every family’s background as thoroughly as possible in order to create avenues which can be satisfactory to all participating parties and which ultimately produce the best educated future citizens.

Epstein (2010) specifies six areas parents can be involved in school events to support their children. This framework seeks ways to shift Latina/o parenting skills to mirror that of “standard or typical middle-class families” (Valdés, 1996, p. 121). The model ignores the school structures and power dynamics that obstruct a two-way relationship between home and schools (López, 2001a). There is no flexibility in Epstein’s framework to embed cultural differences (Auerbach, 2007; Hill & Torres, 2010) nor is there an attempt to question how all families access information and opportunities (Auerbach, 2007). According to Epstein’s (2010) framework, families and schools stand on equal terms in the contested field of education, with a neglect to discuss any structural constraints parents face when interacting with school members.

Categorizing parental behavior under labels reinforces an Anglo-American culture that fails to recognize the experiences marginalized families encounter when interacting with their children’s schools (Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

**Family-school partnerships**

This section presents a review of literature on deficit thinking, barriers to parent engagement, and Latina/o parent engagement. Included in this section is a review of counter-stories that disrupt the status quo. This section explores family-school partnerships from the perspective of Latina/o immigrant parents with children in the high school. There is greater research on Latina/o parent engagement in the primary school years than in urban public high schools years (Ouimette et al., 2006; Zill & Nord, 1994). Factors that contribute to a decline in parental involvement at the high school level include a bigger and more complex school; their
own lack of formal education beyond primary school; an intimidating curriculum; and lesser school outreach to involve parents (Zill & Nord, 1994). Irrespective of the child’s grade, immigrant Latina/o parents report difficulties engaging with their school communities because they feel unwelcome (Chavkin & Williams, 1993; Hill & Torres, 2010); there is a lack of trust (Smith et al., 2008) and experience discrimination based on their legal status, limited English proficiency, and socioeconomic status (Garcia-Reid et al., 2015; López et al., 2010; Olivos & Mendoza, 2010; Orñela & Perreira, 2011). The barriers these factors create appear as insurmountable obstacles for interactions not only in the neighborhood but within public institutions as well.

**Deficit thinking**

A major obstacle most often experienced by Latina/o immigrant parents and their children is a deficit perspective found in public schools. According to Valencia (2010), a deficit thinking in education promotes “the major myth that low-SES parents of color typically do not value the importance of education, fail to inculcate such a value in their children, and seldom participate—through parental engagement activities—in the education of their offspring” (p. 131). Orozco (2008) concurred stating: “Low-income immigrant parents are often viewed as being indifferent to their children’s schooling, failing to encourage their children’s achievement, and, in general, placing low value on education” (p. 22). Olivos (2006) also found that Latina/o immigrant families were marginalized by staff who viewed them as uncaring and disinterested, evidenced by their physical absence in school functions. In other words, families of color do not value education and do not view it as a means of upward mobility (Solórzano, 1992).

Rather than challenge this deficit mindset, Valencia (2010) argued that staff sustain the idea that students fail in the school system because of their individual and their families’
deficiencies instead of long-standing institutional structures and attitudes. Teachers avoid exposing inequities of race, class, and educational opportunity in order to not disturb the status quo at the expense of devaluing the culture of communities of color (Delpit, 1995; Nieto, 2000). This perpetuates school stratification mechanisms that disadvantage minority students. Gonzalez (2010) examined the high school experience of Latina/o undocumented students to compare what internal mechanisms promoted educational attainment and what mechanism promoted educational stagnation (p. 471). Gonzalez found that students’ placement in classes (curriculum tracking) and the relationships they established with teachers and educators determined the school’s success. Students with a positive experience had been tracked into special programs as early as seventh grade. They moved together as a cohort in smaller classrooms, had recognition and support from teachers, and were sheltered from problems encountered in other larger, poorly resourced and gang-filled classrooms. Higher-tracked students forged positive relationships with teachers and guidance counselors. Students who had a negative experience felt disconnected to the school. Because they had not established any positive relationship with a teacher or educator, they felt they had been labeled, left on their own to succeed, and excluded from any resources.

Students’ school success or failure is determined by relationships with school personnel (Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Students in lower tracks experience a different classroom and relationship with their teachers than their peers. In her study of a Chicago school, Flores-González (2002) found that school officials labeled their students as “school kids” and “street kids” based on perceived abilities and skills. These labels stayed with the children through their education, shaped their interactions with teachers and educators, and impacted the tracking decisions made by guidance counselors.
To dismantle the deficit thinking, educators need to become reflective and intellectual thinkers who understand how pedagogy not only works to articulate knowledge, values, and meaning, but also how pedagogy is also a moral and political practice (Freire, 2014; Giroux, 2004). Educators need to challenge the rhetoric and practices of high-stakes testing and “high-risk” interventions (Darder, 2006). Furthermore, meaningful conversations with families of color can be nurtured and fortified for greater parent participation in their children’s education (Delgado-Gaitán, 1994).

**Barriers to family engagement**

A discussion on Latino/a families in education needs to address race and racism. Racism is present in our society and embedded in the social fabric of North American life (Ladson-Billings, 1999; López, 2001). Yet, it is disguised in words such as *equity, meritocracy, and fairness* (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Schools foster themselves as meritocratic, having us believe that all students are treated equally and judged on their own merits (Darder, 1991). Notions of meritocracy solidify an investment in Whiteness and normalizes Anglo-centric values, beliefs, and experiences as those dominant and therefore legitimate in US society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

**Embedded race and racism in schools.** For Latinos, racism is present in many aspects. First, the term *Latino* or *Hispanic* reduces a multicultural and diverse population to a monolithic word that ignores the different nuances that define the richness and plurality of unique cultures (Delgado-Gaitán, 2004; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Valdés, 1996). The average North American citizen lumps all Latinos/Hispanics in the same category that is defined by one commonality - all Latinos/Hispanics speak Spanish. Second, racism is found in negative slurs, such as wetbacks, illegals, or undocumented, which can trigger acts of violence against them.
(Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Racism can also be found in how people perceive Latinas/os to be prone to crime and caught in a cycle of poverty (Reyna et al., 2013). In another study, Lamme, Fu, and Lowery (2004) found that Blacks and Latinas/os although seen as family-oriented and happy were also viewed as aggressive and less intelligent in children’s picture books. Cammarota (2006) argued that these stereotypes emerge from ideological mindframes prevalent in our society that can push minority students out of the school system because they feel a disconnect. Third, US public schools frame oppression through assimilation standards and values that discard the cultures and values of immigrant families who are encouraged to assimilate (Darder, 1995; Diaz-Greenberg, 2003, Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Latina/o students and parents are encouraged to contribute to the “American” success story, in which their voice is not respected enough to enter a collective discourse (Diaz-Greenberg, 2003). Racism in education is a process of small acts of social injustice that persist year after year. Race and racism operate in such subtle ways that we fall short in discerning how racialized practices influence relationships (López, 2001). Over a period of time, students of color witness and feel disparities in their under-resourced and under capacitated schools, tracking systems, lowered expectations, and segregated schooling.

**Latina/o parents and institutional racism.** In their qualitative study of 18 immigrant Latina/o parents acculturating to the U.S., Perreira et al. (2006) explored the experiences parents had with the education and health systems. The researchers noted that schools have traditionally devalued the culture of immigrant youth (Valenzuela, 1999) and marginalized students by race and gender (Perreira et al., 2006). Access to opportunities has been slim, accentuating social inequalities to newly arrived students and parents who have high expectations for their children to achieve in school (Gallimore et al., 2001 as cited by Perreira et al., 2006). Immigrant parents
left their home countries to escape societal factors such as poverty and war. When they arrived to the U.S., they held high expectations for their children to achieve more than they did themselves in school. Upon interacting with their new environment, immigrant parents encountered racism and controlled their fears when interacting with public institutions (Perreira et al., 2006).

Immigrant parents stated they “had personally experienced racism or discrimination; [and] internalized racist remarks” (Perreira et al., 2006 p. 1402). Marginalization was also witnessed by parents who felt educators failed to communicate with them.

School leaders and institutional racism. Institutional racism is also addressed in Briscoe’s (2014) qualitative study that examined how Texas school leaders’ discourse in schools constructed Latino English language learners (ELL) identities. Briscoe proposed that the NCLB Act (2001) held neoliberal policies that facilitated educational leaders to build deficit profiles for Latino students and families. For instance, the NCLB Act sets ELL students up to fail in state-mandated tests. Under impossible expectations, ELL students are given punitive and stressful conditions to perform well in state-mandated tests. The NCLB Act is a form of institutional racism because it represented discrete systematic oppression. In other words, the NCLB Act (2001) facilitated a colorblind discourse, buttressing White privilege by constructing deficit identities for low-income, language deficient, and undereducated, families (Briscoe, 2014). The deficit home theme blamed homes for their children’s poor academic performance, implying that school leaders were not responsible for the underachievement of ELLs.

Teachers and institutional racism. Quirocho and Daoud (2006) conducted a qualitative study on parents’ interaction with their children’s teachers. Set in two Southern California elementary schools, teachers and administrators were interviewed to understand their views on parental involvement. The study found that school staff believed the decrease in student
achievement was linked to the increase of diversity in their school setting. Staff members felt Latino parents were minimally involved in their children’s education. Parents were viewed as unreliable and not caring about their children’s education. School members believed Latina/o parents came from countries that did not value education and, hence, transmitted negative attitudes towards learning. Immigrants who came to the U.S. with a different culture and language were simply not viewed positively by Americans.

Teachers are unaware of how their teaching style may impact home-school connections. The US teacher’s style of indirect, implicit expression may be a sharp contrast to the direct, explicit intention expressed in other cultures (Delpit, 1995; Valdés, 1996). Non-verbal language can also create conflict when there is a misunderstanding. For example, Latino/a students show respect by avoiding eye contact, showing deference, and not questioning teachers in class (Garcia-Reid et al., 2015). Teachers may interpret this as distracted or as a learning disability (Delpit, 1995; Noguera, 2006). Similarly, Latina/o parents trust the American education system and respect teachers’ positions to not interfere in their practice (Auerbach, 2007; de Gaetano, 2007; LeFevre & Shaw 2012; Olivos, 2009; Peña 2000). Teachers may also not be aware of how Latina/o cultural values and beliefs limit students’ participation in class.

Educational leaders and educators are not prepared to work with Latina/o immigrant parents and students (Delgado-Gaitán, 1998; Garcia-Reid et al., 2015; Olivos, 2009). Educators must identify effective instructional programs and strategies to guarantee successful student learning (Bartolomé, 1994). Staff need to alter their narrow, mechanistic instructional practice to become more strategic and culturally responsive to academically stimulate their students and show them respect (Bartolomé, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 2005). Educators can also exercise praxis, a critical unconsciousness based on critical reflection and action (Freire, 2014). Educators
cannot remove themselves from their professional contexts and ignore the configurations of power, culture, ideology, politics, and domination (Giroux, 2004). By becoming critical thinkers in their practice, educators learn to confront structural inequalities in their workspaces and improve the quality of their work.

In regard to parent engagement, school leaders and educators need to validate the language and culture of Latina/o immigrant parents. They need to understand and respect how Latina/o parents are engaged in the education of their child by offering moral supports, *consejos* (advice), and encouragement (Auerbach, 2007; deGaetano, 2007; Delgado-Gaitán, 2004). Latina/o parents and the family social network are critical contributors to children’s academic success (Auerbach, 2007; Delgado-Gaintán, 1994; Gándara, 1995). Educators need to learn the benefits of collaborating and communicating with all family members to comprehend new perspectives, create new resources, and develop supports for improved student outcome (Olivos, 2006).

**(Counter)Storytelling**

To uncover institutional racism that has prevented families and students of color from meaningful participation in schools, leaders must dig deeply into the issue of race and how race impacts the education of all students (Delgado, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Yosso, 2005). Whether leaders’ open platforms in their schools for parents of color to convene, or whether leaders acknowledge a parent-agency group in the community, listening to the stories of diverse families’ increases communication, sets aside judgments, and readjusts hidden structures to create a culturally sensitive setting that can enhance learning for both teachers and students. Delgado (1989) discussed the power stories play in our lives, especially when they are “situated in legal and political discourse” (p. 2413). Delgado pointed out that it is the counter-story told by
disenfranchised people that shakes the status quo and engages our consciousness in new realities. Without a counter-story, our perception of how things are taught and done in school, for example, are taken for granted and never questioned.

Counter-stories, thus, are “tools of liberation for the oppressed” (p. 2436) and tools to chip away at the majoritarian story. They become a means for culturally and linguistically diverse families to self-preserve their identity while assuaging “their subordination” (p. 2436). By sharing similar struggles and difficulties, individuals articulate experiences that have also been lived by others and by re-telling and listening to these events the individuals undergo a healing process together. Storytelling ties groups of people together, creating solidarity amongst them. All members of society should listen to counter-stories. They enrich everyone’s life and remind us that realities are socially constructed through daily interactions and conversations.

Ladson-Billings (1999) also values storytelling within the five tenets of critical race theory (CRT) to analyze different forms of social inequities. Storytelling lifts minority voices to the public arena. It unveils racial injustices (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Understanding, feeling, and interpreting contexts through stories linked to racial justice have the potential of strengthening legal discourse for all individuals (Ladson-Billings, 1999). School leaders need to look beyond their red, brick walls to incorporate families of color in their schools. It is not sufficient to look at curriculum, pedagogy, assessments, or follow mandates blindly. New approaches need to be considered. One such approach is to critically examine systemic elements that perpetuate educational and social inequities. This can be done by listening to Latina/o families’ testimonios and valuing the cultural wealth these communities possess (Yosso, 2005).
Summary

There are no politically neutral public spaces (Freire, 2014). The purposeful refusal of state, district, and school policies to bridge cultures and languages (Villenas, 2014) and acknowledge that deficit mindsets block how others perceive Latina/o parents’ engagement with their communities and children’s education creates negative perceptions of this group. These attitudes filter down to school staff who pick up on these prejudices. Historically, policies, small practices, and discourses have been institutionalized to sustain a deep-seated racism that negatively affects communities of color. Rather than acknowledging their limitations, school members avoid exposing inequities of race to not disturb the status quo at the expense of devaluing the culture and language of students of color (Delpit, 1995; Nieto, 2000).

To date, educators fall short in opening positive channels for better communication between themselves and the parents of their students (Auerbach, 2006; Delgado-Gaitán, 1991; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). When interacting with disenfranchised families, leaders must delve deeper into cultural and linguistic differences that exist in structural elements (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). Educational leaders need to address issues of power, culture, and identity to challenge long-standing patterns in the educational system and encourage others to think critically about privilege, oppression, and power (Bettez, 2004; Freire, 2014; Giroux, 2004). This involves re-examining values, policies, procedures, and language which were once relevant but because of emerging perspectives new behaviors are needed to address issues of equity in education (Freire, 2014; Giroux, 2004; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997).

Cultural Capital in Schools

Latino/a families value an American education as an avenue into what they hope is an entrée into American life. Like the majority of parents, they hope their children will go further
than they did in school and surpass their achievements (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Zarate, 2007). There is, however, a misalignment between what Latina/o immigrant parents expect and what their children receive in a school curriculum. Culturally responsive scholars contend that school curricula intended for all students are inequitable and silence a group’s strengths (Freire, 2014; Cammarota, 2008; Yosso, 2005). To understand this misalignment, there needs to be an understanding what of cultural capital is and whose cultural capital is represented in public schools.

Bourdieu (1977) wrote about cultural capital in schools. Cultural capital encompasses traditions, knowledge, skills, and preferences associated with White middle-class culture often found in public educational institutions that marginalize students and families of color (Yosso, 2005). This cultural capital is socially inherited and believed to contribute to academic success (Bourdieu and Patterson, 1977). For example, Delpit (1988) reminds us that the dominant society requires codes or rules to participate in it. These rules include “linguistic forms, communicative strategies, and presentation of self, that is, ways of talking, writing, dressing, and ways of interacting (Delpit, 1988, p. 283). If a student does not exercise these codes or rules, he or she will encounter a different experience at school. The dominant group (White, middle-class community members), the school constructs (curricula), policies (NCLB Act of 2002), and educators reproduce the same cultural capital under the guise of fairness and equity (Bourdieu, 1977; Giroux 1986).

Lareau and Horvat (1999) saw that families possessed cultural capital invested in many settings, yet not all forms of cultural capital were valued equally in these settings. Traditionally, White, middle-class parents had a “home advantage” (Lareau & Horvat, 1999) unfamiliar to families of color and others. According to Lareau and Horvat (1999) membership in the White,
middle, and upper social classes were goals to aim for and, thus, best reflected American society’s educational values. The dominant classes’ expected portfolio of values and norms assumed that all students shared and desired the same cultural outcomes (Bourdieu & Patterson, 1977).

Giroux (1992) expressed this tension in school settings stating that educational leaders display no urgency in rewriting the master script that resorts to standardized curricula. There is little attention given to examining the relationship between power and knowledge and how students can be prepared to navigate through dominant spheres of gender, class, and race. Public schools are capable of reaching out to middle- and upper-class families who are well prepared to respond to school expectations regarding student achievement (Desimone, 1999). However, schools have greater difficulty reaching out to low-income parents.

Adhering to the CRT framework, Yosso (2005) challenged Bourdieu (1977) notion of cultural capital. Yosso (2005) employed a positive lens to explain that diverse families are equipped with their own cultural capital. According to Yosso (2005), students of color possess talents, strengths, and experiences which they bring to the classroom. Educators who recognize this knowledge center their instruction on household activities or lived experiences that challenge a cultural deficit thinking in education. Moreover, educators acknowledge that family members are carriers of funds of knowledge that hold resources for them to tap into (Orozco, 2008).

**Latina/o Parental Engagement**

As newcomers to the American landscape, Latina/o immigrant parents make accommodations to adapt to and resist everyday structural constraints (Hidalgo, 1998). These acts of adaptation are sources of invisible strength and fortitude that should not be seen as a deficit, but rather a strength. Latina/o parents care about the education of their children (Valdés,
and do engage in the education of their children both at home and at school (Delgado-Gaitán, 2004; López, 2001). There is a consensus that immigrant families have a greater aspiration for their children to be academically successful than do U.S.-born families (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Ramirez, 2008). Immigrant Latina/o parent engagement can be understood by examining home interactions that reveal assets found both in the home and community (González et al., 1995; Moll et al; 1992; Yosso, 2005). These assets can be defined as caring (Sands & Plunkett, 2005), emotionally guiding (Auerbach, 2007) academically supportive (Plunkett & Bácamara-Gómez, 2003), empowering (Delgado-Gaitán, 1991) and relational (Moll et al., 1992; Yosso, 2005).

**Caring and emotional supports.** Caring and supporting supportive characteristics can be found in Latina/o parent typologies. In her qualitative study of Latino/a parents, Auerbach (2007) analyzed three years of ethnographic data to examine different typologies of parent profiles in the education of their children. Through open-ended questions, Auerbach discerned characteristics of parental involvement that could be grouped into three typologies: (1) moral supporters, (2) struggling advocates, and (3) ambivalent companions.

*Moral supporters* represented Latino/a immigrant parents who had the least educational background, the least knowledge of the American school system, and the least fluency in English compared to the other parents in the study. Moral supporting parents exhibited indirect moral support for education, giving moral and emotional support at home. While they emphasized the value of education, responsibility, study and hard work, they themselves rarely went to the school. In fact, they trusted the teachers to prepare their children to be college ready.

Moral supporters adhered to the concept of *educación*, which has a broader definition from its English cognate education (Hill & Torres, 2010). When moral supporters perceived their
child to be listo/a (smart) and to show ganas (be willing or having ambition), the parent encouraged the child to pursue his or her studies. In addition to receiving a school education, in educación moral supporters were teaching morals and respect to their children as a basis for academic studies and professional success. In many instances, moral supporters relied on consejos, personal narratives of their own lives to motivate their children to work harder and do better than themselves. As long as they were able to encourage their children to do well in school, moral supporters were involved in their child’s education. However, moral supporters were cognizant of their limited knowledge base as well as educational experience to be involved in the high school years of their children.

Struggling advocates shared traits found in moral supporters. They too provided moral and emotional support for education. Struggling advocates also provided direct, monitoring of work at home while intervening directly with school personnel. Struggling advocates were more informed about college opportunities. They relied on college-educated friends to learn how to access new information. While their children were in high school, struggling advocates constructed a social network, also known as navigational capital, to learn more about higher education. They spoke directly to guidance counselors about different college pathways. They also pushed their children to get ahead while feeling frustrated with the resistance they received from their children. These parents also experienced having been rebuffed by school personnel who devalued their social and cultural capital. One struggling advocate parent keenly observed that the school projected educational equity to all students when only some students were placed in good classes for college admission. Although struggling advocates exerted effort and time to help their children succeed in school, their children did not fare as well as moral supporters.
**Ambivalent companions** is the third typology of parent involvement. Ambivalent supporters were more knowledgeable about college than moral Supporters, yet the depth of their understanding was thin. Ambivalent companions reflected a more hands-off approach than the other two types. They gave moral and emotional support for college, praised good work, and stressed the importance of hard work. While ambivalent companions had high expectations for their children to have better opportunities, they expressed conflicting messages because college was viewed as a threat to close family ties and obligations.

The role of parent typology Auerbach (2007) presents in her study is one set of characteristics working-class, Latina/o parents displayed when they helped their children students apply to colleges. It expanded the existing definitions on parent engagement as it delved into how vulnerable parents feel when supporting their college-bound students, while evaluating the cultural intentions behind the parents’ actions. Auerbach stated that unlike parents of a higher socio-economic status who resorted to economic, social, and cultural capital, the working-class parents she studied drew on their moral, navigational, and emotional capital to support their children to be college ready.

With respect to moral supporting parents, Cooper (2002) found that Mexican immigrant parents resorted to moral guidance to shift their children away from *el mal camino*, the bad path, of negative peer influences. Moral support manifested itself in supporting school success. Parents held high aspirations for their children to pursue their studies in higher education even though they themselves did not complete primary school. Likewise, Latina/o adolescents who reported positive relationships with their parents were more likely to perform well in school.

**Academic supports.** Parents proved to be crucial in fostering academic engagement in their students in a mixed-methods, Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation Study (LISA)
conducted by Suárez-Orozco et al., (2009). Immigrant youth from Central America, China, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico were studied over a five-year period to understand how the role of relationships mediated their academic engagement and performance. Parents proved to be vital for supporting their children’s academic performance. Students’ recognized a “complex combination of love, affection, appreciation, gratitude, responsibility, and sense of duty” that influenced their study and academic outcome (Fuligini & Pederson, 2002 as cited in Suárez-Orozco et al., p. 734). In addition, students recognized the sacrifices and struggles parents made on their behalf.

Latino youth also perceived academic support from their mothers and fathers. Sands and Plunkett (2005) examined how parents provided academic encouragement to their Mexican and Central American adolescents in Los Angeles. Latina youth were able to associate maternal warmth with academic support by their mothers and Latino adolescents reported academic supports from their fathers. Alfaro et al. (2006) reported similar results in their study of 154 Latina/o adolescents. Parental academic support was linked to student motivation when there were instances of same-gender parent-youth relationship. This is to say, young men’s academic motivation was related to fathers’ academic support and young women’s academic motivation was influenced by their mothers’ academic support.

Similarly, Plunkett and Bámaca-Gómez (2003) studied 273 Mexican high school students, examining the relationship between academic outcomes and parenting. The researchers found a positive relationship between parent supports and students’ academic motivation. Parent supports were defined as meaningful, caring, and supportive relationships that involved talking about school and future professions. Students who perceived their parents’ supports exerted efforts in school, finished homework on time, and reported to like school. In other words,
Latina/o adolescents reported increased academic motivation based on their parents’ support and involvement.

Garcia-Reid et al. (2015) found that parental support positively related to student academic engagement. In their quantitative study of Latino immigrant adolescents, the researchers used a social capital lens to examine how parent and teacher supports influenced school engagement. They noted that students’ engagement with school increased as both parent and teacher supports increased. The presence of these two variables was critical for student engagement and staying out of school trouble.

In her eight-year, ethnographic study of the Latino immigrant Estrada family, Delgado-Gaitán (1994) observed how the Estradas supported their children's learning through consejos (nurturing advice). In elementary school, consejos focused on encouraging children to get the best grades possible. In middle and high school consejos encouraged the children to advocate for themselves and take responsibility for their own problems. Throughout this process, Delgado-Gaitán highlighted how family dialogue at home closely supported the school experience.

**Empowerment and agency.** Empowerment and agency also defines Latina/o parental engagement. Parents’ personal motivation drives parents’ efficacy to enter school spaces and advocate for their children (Jasis & Ordóñez-Jasis, 2012). A collective action and advocacy of Latina/o parents to address unequal schooling practices is an approach of a community seeking a positive partnership with their school. Jasis and Ordóñez-Jasis (2004) situated the efforts of a school-based Latino parent project in the historical context of Latinos/as’ “struggles for educational equality” (p.33). Through organized practices, collective mobilization and solidarity, working-class Latinos/as “challenged ideological and institutional structures” to include their children in educational opportunities (Donato, 1997 as cited by Jasis & Ordóñez-Jasis, 2004,
p.33). Aware of social, economic and educational policies, and actions against them, Latinos/as adopted a “politics of participation” (p. 33) that aimed to replace inadequate structures with new ones (Abalos, 1986 as cited in Jasis & Ordóñez, 2004, p. 34).

Political activity became an element of empowerment in which Latinos forged a new public sphere to advocate for the betterment of Latino/a education. The La Familia Initiative in California is an example of positive channeling of community and schools. This parent organization developed as an independent parent group to raise all students’ achievement at the school and create a working relationship with the school. Through regular meetings and hosting multicultural activities, such as poetry reading and cooking, La Familia Initiative was fruitful in breaking down negative assumptions about how educators perceived their lack of interest regarding their children’s education. Furthermore, it gave parents a sense of empowerment and new possibilities for improving their children’s education.

Ordóñez-Jasis and Jasis (2004) presented how a local parent community-based intervention and community group influenced the labeling of Chicano-Latino students in special education to enhance the participation of immigrant families whose invisibility at the school gave educators the impression that these parents were disengaged from their children’s class work. The De Colores Community Learning Center, another California-based initiative, partnered with a non-profit organization Art, Research and Associates (ARC) requiring (1) parents to become advocates for their children, (2) teachers to facilitate student achievement, and (3) administrators to offer support at the district level and create institutional reciprocity to provide the best services and outcomes for all students (p. 60).

Critical to this work was an empowerment model exemplified by Latino/a parents who organized and mobilized themselves to form an active partnership with school members that
included improved dialogue, nurturing of cultural pride, and enhancing academic performance for their children. More importantly was the intention to dismantle power structures and transform parents from being powerless individuals to collectively gain strength to become proactive (Cruikshank, 1999 as cited by Ordóñez-Jasis & Jasis, 2004). Through testimonios parents revealed their commitment to the project sacrificing their sleep and personal time between work schedules to engage in transformative dialogue and action.

Jasis and Ordóñez-Jasis (2012) took an ethnographic approach to examine the motivation of immigrant Latino/a parents’ school-based participation in three communities in California. Their study built on the work of both Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (Hoover-Dempsey & Whitaker, 2010 as cited by Jasis & Ordóñez-Jasis, 2012) and Lareau (1994) that argued how parents’ action and advocacy drove them to collectively create a safe and positive learning environment for their children in the schools. Two notions were considered in the study: narratives and testimonios. Narrative testimonios validate and give voice to the daily struggles, realities and aspirations of a disenfranchised group in a public space that is marked by an official and long-standing discourse. Furthermore, Jasis and Ordóñez-Jasis (2012) posited that narrative testimonios informed leaders of broader societal forces that shaped how vulnerable families interacted with teachers, educators and school administrators.

Delgado-Gaitán (1991) argued that power undergirds parental involvement. In her case study of Mexican parents in Carpinteria, California, Delgado-Gaitán described how a family-school partnership was shared by both families and schools. The Comité de Padres Latinos (COPLA), Parent Committee, worked with educators and school members to learn how to navigate the school system, understand their rights as parents, and develop strategies to support their children’s success at school. Parents even demonstrated leadership skills within the school
with their implementation and execution of a Family Literacy Project (FLP). Teachers were given time during the school day to interact with Latino parents, school leaders hired bicultural and bilingual people to facilitate communication and the principal acknowledge the parent group as a vital resource.

**Relational.** The concept of *funds of knowledge* is based on the idea that peoples’ lived experiences constitute their knowledge and becomes families’ shared information to move forward, persist, and succeed (Gónzalez et al., 1995; Moll et al., 1992). This knowledge is generally shared in households or family activities. Delgado-Gaitán (2004) argued that building a home-school connection around dialogue opened a new understanding of resources and assets Latina/o families possessed. In addition, it highlighted how student learning with different people took place. Establishing two-way communication with Latina/o families was a valuable pathway to learn about the strengths and resources diverse communities had. Educators who use *funds of knowledge* in their practice value families for their resources (language, culture, lived experience and know-how) and find ways to incorporate these resources into their teaching practices (Bartolomé, 1994; Delgado-Gaitán, 2004; Gay, 2010, Nieto, 2005; Villegas, 1991).

Moll et al. (1992) designed an ethnographic project that involved 10 educators to explore the rich backgrounds and families coming from the non-dominant culture. These teachers became household researchers to gain information on how family histories and activities could be connected to instructional activities. Moll et al. (1992) called these household activities *funds of knowledge* and defined it as the “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills necessary for household or individual functioning and well-being” (p. 133). The teachers in the study observed how household members would resort to their own abilities, skills, and knowledge to confront challenges in their daily interactions in the neighborhood, at
work or school. Their students, in particular, were viewed as active members learning and doing activities in multiple spheres (p. 133). In addition, Moll et al. (1992) pointed out the importance of *confianza* (trust) observed in the exchanges among relatives, neighbors, and friends. Through each exchange, children were interacting confidently in different contexts and participating in many activities. According to Moll et al., teachers in the study who tapped into these *funds of knowledge* went beyond the folkloric exhibition of arts and crafts in their classes to incorporate families' culture into their teaching practices.

The significance of family and its extended social network for Latina/o student support, growth, and success cannot be overstated. (Auerbach, 2006; Delgado-Gaitán, 1994, 2004; Valdés, 1996). *Familismo* (familism) is an integral part of *funds of knowledge* and relates to a family's strong identification, loyalty, reciprocity with one another (Valdés, 1996). There is a commitment to aid the family over individual needs and desires (Halgunesth et al., 2006). This strong commitment to connectedness runs counter to the Euro-American curriculum that transmits values of self-reliance, independence, and individualism (Hill & Tyson, 2010).

Stein et al. (2013) conducted a study premised on the idea that economics, acculturation, and discrimination had adverse outcomes for Latino youth. However, adolescents who experienced high levels of familism experienced less stress. In their study of 119 youth, Stein et al. (2013) found that adolescents who endorsed stronger ties with their families maintained “a greater sense of belonging to one’s school” (p. 1266). These adolescents were able to transfer their sense of obligation, expectation, good will and loyalty to their schools and teachers in order to please their parents or caregivers.

Mothers are traditionally seen as the main carriers of culture and given the matriarchal hierarchy in Latino culture (Valdés, 1996). The mother figure is essential in Latino identity and
in raising her children (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Paz, 1994; Valdés, 1996). In their qualitative study of 48 Mexican and Dominican mothers, Calzada et al. (2010) examined how Latina mothers socialized their children for them to better navigate through the American system while maintaining their Latino cultural core. Two cultural values, relevant to this study, observed were *familia* (family) and *respeto* (respect). The cohesion of the family ensured that children show respect to their parents and elders and this extended to a broader sphere. The mothers believed that obedience, deference, decorum and public behavior would stand their children in good stead regardless of whatever setting they found themselves in (Calzada, et al., 2010).

López (2001) interviewed five sets of Latino immigrant parents in Texas. López examined the home engagement practices of the Padilla family. Through the ethic of hard work and real life experiences, the Padilla family instilled the value of education in their children, hoping they could apply this template to their learning in school. The Padilla family shared with their children their strenuous, uncompensated work to stress the value of education. This study was similar to an earlier work conducted by López (1999) who studied Chicano/Latino families in Texas. In the 1999 study, López found that Latina/o parents displayed a work ethic to their children in an attempt to have them appreciate and value school. By witnessing their parents work long hours, children were made to understand that their work and contribution to the family was to study hard at school in order to eventually land a well-paying job (López, 2001).

These two studies (Lopez 1999 and 2001) remain relevant as they are grounded on the belief that households are funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and, therefore, wells to be drawn upon. By attempting to have continuity through promoting family traditions regardless of socio-economic constraints, many Latino families aim to instill the importance of hard work and integrity in their children (López, 1999, 2001).
Summary

The concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1997) highlights how educational systems legitimize class inequities and sustain power-oppressive relationships. Educational members transmit the values and norms of middle and upper class families in society, assuming that all students come and ought to come to school reflecting the cultural capital of the dominant group. Marginalized students and families who have a different cultural capital struggle in the system. Lareau and Horvat (1999) recognized that multiple cultural capitals exist in a playing field controlled by the hegemonic group.

Cultural capital exercised by low-income and immigrant families are not acknowledged because they do not reflect the norms and values of the middle and upper class (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Strong relational connectedness found in household *funds of knowledge* and familism stand in a sharp contrast to the cultural capital of the dominant group (Delgado-Gaitán, 1994; Moll et al., 1992; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). They stress that a family-community partnership exists whereby adult-teachers know and work with the “whole” child who is immersed in different spheres of activities that are not limited to a classroom (Moll et al, 1992).

Summation of Literature Review

This review of the literature offered an understanding of parent engagement in American public schools. The current policy and framework must be (re)defined and (re)examined to fully encompass the engagement and empowerment of Latina/o parents. Asymmetrical power relations exist in the home-school relationships that create barriers for a full inclusion of parents of color. Educational leaders need to unveil the implicit and embedded institutional deficit notions held on Latina/o students and their parents. School personnel often lack cross-cultural sensitivity to interact with families of different cultural backgrounds. They need to shift their
paradigms to become more culturally relevant in their practice. Forging strong trusting relationships between school staff and Latina/o parents can be transformational for all stakeholders. Parents acquire a strong sense of ownership and school staff gain new insights into how to secure Latina/o students’ success at school.
Chapter 3: Research Design

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the experience of Latina/o parents who had a child in a public high school. The study sought to understand the lived stories of parents as personal, detailed accounts while simultaneously offer a new viewpoint on family engagement. Qualitative research suited the purpose of this study for several reasons that Creswell (2008) pointed out. First, there was a topic that needed to be explored. Second, my goal was to give voice to a vulnerable population to validate and share their stories with me and other school members to minimize any power that could exist among us. Third, quantitative tools and analysis would not capture the complexity of family engagement.

In regard to family engagement, a one-size-fits all approach to the Latino population was insufficient, as each Latin American family needs tailor-made strategies to best incorporate them in the national education system of the United States. The overarching research question in this study was:

How do immigrant Guatemalan families who have children in a northeastern high school make sense of their children’s education?

The sub-questions are:

- How does racism shape the experiences of Guatemalan parents/families at my high school?
- How do Guatemalan families use their cultural capital in schools?
- How does the high school empower Guatemalan families?

Research Paradigm

Researchers approach their empirical study with values and philosophical assumptions that can be encompassed by paradigms. A paradigm offers a conceptual framework for how
researchers experience the nature of things around them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 as cited by Anfara & Mertz, 2006). It reflects scholars’ shared assumptions, values, and practices (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A paradigm also allows the researcher to walk through the study with a choice of tools, instruments, subjects and method (Ponterotto, 2005). A critical-ideological paradigm aligns with my assumptions and places Latino family engagement as the primary unit of analysis. This kind of paradigm can be emancipatory and transformative (Ponterotto, 2005), and it may position me as a criticalist to understand reality and events within power relations (Ponterotto, 2005). In addition, this paradigm allows me to work towards social justice through problem-solving and dialogical discourse between Latina/o immigrant parents as well as monolingual and monocultural White educators.

Ponterotto (2005) holds that ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological assumptions are philosophical anchors in paradigms. An ontological assumption centers on the nature of reality as assumed by each subject in the study. In a paradigm, a constellation of realities is recognized to discern shared themes to unmask structural oppressions that the subjects encounter in their context. In this study, my role was to listen to the narratives of parents and learn how they understood education, what they identified as barriers to their involvement in the education of their children, and what they perceived as facilitating their involvement in the education of their children.

An epistemological assumption centers on the relationship between the researcher and his/her participants. For my research, the description of the German term *Erlebnis*, “the lived experience” between the researcher and the participants, is essential (Ponterotto, 2005). A paradigm enables the *Erlebnis* to be empowering and emancipatory to the participants in the study. In my professional activity I invite Latina/o families to my monthly Parent Leadership
Workshops in the *Finish Strong!* program that serves as a platform for parents to make their voices heard and make them aware of how they can navigate the school systems in collaboration with educators. A goal of my professional work is to empower families to give them the confidence and the security to voice their stories.

An axiological assumption centers on the role of values researchers place in the research process. The critical-ideological assumption acknowledges that the researcher’s values will influence and impact the outcome of the study. In a critical-ideological approach the qualitative researcher seeks to fracture a status quo and bring about a self-actualization of a silenced population.

**Methodology**

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and working with *testimonios* (counter-storytelling) were the methodologies selected for this study. IPA is a qualitative approach that focuses on exploring how people make sense of their real life experiences and how reading about these experiences adds a richer and deeper layer of understanding on an aspect of human experience (Smith et al., 2009; van Manen, 1990; Laverty, 2003). IPA was appropriate for this study because it attempted to capture the perception of immigrant Guatemalan families whose children attended a public high school. It explored the question “What is this experience like?” and it “attempted to unfold meanings as they are lived in everyday existence” of immigrant Guatemalan parents and caregivers (Laverty, 2003, p. 22). IPA was also suitable for understanding how parents engaged with educators and policies while raising their children both at home and at school. IPA did not intend to test a hypothesis, but rather explore the meanings immigrant Guatemalan parents gave to the experience of family engagement.
Experiences derive from interacting with objects found in the lifeworld and are defined as daily actions and activities manifested in and around those objects (van Manen, 1990). Lived experiences are not acknowledged the moment they occur, but are rather recognized as a past, (re)collected moment that is selected by the researcher for interpretation. By capturing these experiences and translating them in the form of texts, we represent a past experience through a reflection that may illuminate its essence (van Manen, 1990). This process of translation and interpretation implies that the true meaning of lived experiences may be disguised by taken-for-granted daily interactions with objects in our environment (van Manen, 1990; Laverty, 2003).

The purpose of IPA is to delve deeply into the meaning of these automatic interactions to unveil a neglected or new meaning (Laverty, 2003). The moment a parent enrolls his or her child in a public school system, the process of family engagement is ignited. For parents whose cultural background aligns with that of the school, the process runs relatively smoothly. For parents whose cultural and linguistic background is discordant with that of the school, the process can be complex and challenging. This is the point to begin to inquire about the feelings, emotions, reactions, intentions and words parents produce and experience. IPA as a methodological approach can help capture and describe these particular realities of how families coming from different cultures interact with school members.

**Philosophical Underpinnings**

Jonathan A. Smith developed IPA as an experiential approach concerned with a detailed examination of people’s personal lived experiences. Smith’s approach requires the researcher to take an active role in interpreting. This approach is also ideographic because it focuses on the particularities of a case before analysing broader claims (IPARG). Smith et al. (2009) state that
IPA is informed by three long-standing philosophical traditions: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography (Smith et al., 2009).

First, phenomenology is the study of the life world and seeks to understand the everyday acts and interactions of people (van Manen, 1990). Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) is recognized as the father of phenomenology (Laverty, 2003). Unlike the natural sciences that approached human issues through taxonomies, classifications or abstract experiences to maintain objectivity in meaning, Husserl was concerned with re-examining the everyday lived meanings as a basis of knowledge and science (van Manen, 1990; Smith et al., 2009). According to Husserl, human experiences are produced pre-reflexively, meaning that experiences are spontaneous acts that can be defined as ordinary and common sense (Laverty, 2003). Phenomenology is interested in understanding these spontaneous acts, also referred to as structures of consciousness, before they come absorbed and forgotten in the habits and routines of society.

Phenomenology argues that describing these structures of consciousness leads to the essence of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). In order to grasp this essence, Husserl proposed that we bracket or suspend personal biases in order to understand the essence of the phenomena clearly. Husserl is also known for the term intentionality, which refers to the researcher’s conscious intention or purpose towards the object of study (van Manen, 1990; Laverty, 2003). A rich description of the lived meanings encapsulated in internal structures gives the object, or the phenomenon, an identifiable label that sets it apart from other internal meaning structures as unique (Laverty, 2003). In my research, I am focusing on one structure of consciousness articulated as by immigrant Guatemalan families. That is to say, the experiences of these parents as they engage with public high school members while their child is attending that school.
Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) studied under Husserl and took a different approach to studying the life world (Laverty, 2003). Rather than understanding the phenomenon through intentionality as Husserl did, Heidegger was concerned with the German concept of Dasein ("being there"), meaning that the researcher is always already present in the life world with other subjects, language and culture (Laverty, 2003). In this case, researchers subjectively interpret the life world, questioning what the lived experiences mean for them (Smith et al., 2009). It is impossible for researchers to separate their understanding from the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). Laverty (2003) states it succinctly when she says “pre-understanding is not something a person can step outside of or put aside, as it is understood as already being with us in the world” (p. 24).

Heidegger argued that the understanding of a phenomenon was linked to existing forestructures whereby the researcher’s historicality accounted for a layer of interpretation on the lived experiences that could be added to their study (Laverty, 2003). The hermeneutic circle explains this interpretive process. The researcher extracts meaning of other people’s experiences “through a circle of readings, reflective writings and interpretations” (Laverty, 2003, p. 30).

Second, hermeneutics is the study of interpretation and social worlds. Its etymology points at the mythological figure of Hermes, the Greek god-messenger who carried knowledge and understanding between gods and mortals. The discipline of hermeneutics begins with Friedrich Daniel Schleiermacher, who focused on exegesis, or the interpretation of Biblical texts. Wilhelm Dilthey equated the field to textualism, an approach that involved the reduction of all forms of interpretation to one form: reading (Gallagher, 1992, p. 326).

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) took a philosophical approach to textual hermeneutics to develop his ideas about (1) the question and an answer, (2) the forestructure of understanding,
and (3) the hermeneutic circle. These three constructs are linked together through language in the form of discourse between the text and the interpreter to reach new meanings. In the first construct, questions asked in hermeneutics open the conversation in a new direction. (Gallagher, 1992). The beginning of all inquiries is triggered by a question, followed by reading a variety of texts to explore answers. In the second construct, Gadamer recognized the importance of researchers acknowledging their biases and prejudices as part of the hermeneutical process. Gadamer expressed this through a fusion of horizons whereby a historical horizon in the past and a present horizon in the current moment merge to form a new horizon (Laverty, 2003). At this point, another question is asked to open a new horizon that will need to be reached and tackled to another set of texts. According to Gadamer, “interpretation is an evolving process” (Laverty, 2003, p. 25) because the researcher is actively involved in making sense of the participants’ personal experiences. In the third construct, questions surface once again, to bridge historical and present horizons between the familiar and the unfamiliar (Gallagher, 1992).

In IPA there is a double hermeneutics whereby, in the case of this study, I interpreted parents’ interpretations of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). In the analytical process of this study, parents narrated major events in their interactions with educators in the high school. Therefore, I, could intentionally immerse myself in their narratives to understand how these individual experiences were lived from the parents’ perspectives. During my interpretations of parents’ perceptions, I probed deeper into the meaning of their reality asking further questions to understand the complexity of their experiences within the public school. Consequently, as parents narrated their experiences, they also engaged in a critical reflection of their personal lived reality.
Ideography is a third major influence in IPA. Ideography looks at the particular phenomenon, which is understood from two perspectives. First, ideography is concerned with detail, “the depth of analysis” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 29). Second, ideography seeks to understand the particular experience lived by particular individuals in a particular context (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, IPA relies on a small, selected, and carefully situated sample of participants. Smith et al. (2009) caution that ideography is not an exclusive focus on the individual as it is an understanding of the phenomenological view of experiences of particular individuals.

**Testimonios (counter-stories)**

This study was also guided by Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) framework. CRT was valuable for its focus on the lived experiences of people of color and drive towards social justice (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). As a branch of CRT, LatCrit examines the intersection of race, class, and gender (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). LatCrit also validated the unique ways in which Latina/o communities experience subordination based on immigration status, language, and ethnicity (Pérez Huber, 2012). Testimonio, here understood as counter-storytelling, as embedded in CRT and LatCrit was another research method suitable to this study.

In Spanish, testimonio means to testify or bear witness to an event. As part of a Latin American literary genre, testimonios are produced by individuals who experience oppression, exploitation, marginality, crime, and resistance (Beverly, 1987; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). As a counter-story methodology, testimonio seeks to hear the stories often not heard or listened to that can challenge the stories of those in power (Elenes & Delgado Bernal, 2010; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Villalpando, 2003). There are several characteristics that define a testimonio: (1) it is a narrative; (2) it is told in the first person; (3) the narrator is witness to or victim of a
significant event; (4) there is an urge to narrate the event; (5) the narrator is marginalized and talks about a subaltern context; and (6) there is a listener who records and writes about the experience (Beverly, 1987).

Testimonios are personal, intentional since there is an urgency, and political (Beverly, 1987; Delgado Bernal & Elenes, 2011). As a methodology, testimonios elevate the voice of individuals who talk about systemic oppression or educational inequalities (Beverly, 2005). Through narrating their story, parents reflect and begin to dismantle educational inequalities they face (Beverly, 2005; Freire, 2014).

In this study, CRT and LatCrit informed how I understood a testimonio created by immigrant Guatemalan parents to:

- expose structural conditions or injustices which result in oppression (Pérez Huber, 2012)
- challenge the dominant ideology (Pérez Huber, 2012; Yosso, 2002)
- legitimize the subordinated experiences of immigrant Guatemalan parents (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004)
- raise critical consciousness to work towards racial and social justice (Cervantes-Soon, 2012)

In accordance with Chicano/Latina feminist scholarship (Cervantes-Soon, 2012; Pérez Huber, 2012), I brought attention to the everyday activities of immigrant Guatemalan parents as they related to the education of their high school child (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012) and I validated their voices as carriers of cultural knowledge.
To conclude, an IPA approach borrows from the philosophies of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography, and it is concerned with understanding how people come to terms with their lived experience. Based on phenomenology, IPA research seeks to examine a rich and detailed lifeworld. In addition, hermeneutics provides an interpretative stance whereby both the participant’s life experience and the researcher’s perspectives are woven together. Ideography adds to the research for the rich descriptions, interpretations, and understanding of others’ lived experiences (van Manen, 1990). By working with testimonio as methodology I deconstructed traditional notions of home-school interactions by drawing from new understandings of the experiences of immigrant Guatemalan parents.

Participants

IPA research uses purposeful sampling in order for all participants to have a shared experience (Smith et al., 2009). This study drew its sampling field work from immigrant Guatemalan parents who participated in a monthly Parent Leadership Workshop in the Finish Strong! Program at a public high school located in the Northeast of the U.S. The only criteria for parent consideration was that the parents had at least one child in the public high school. The sampling strategy employed in this study was purposive. Since this study sought to discover how immigrant Guatemalan families engaged in the educational process of their high school student, data collection was limited to these families. Three male and three female immigrant Guatemalan parents and guardians participated in the study. Their ages ranged from 28 to 40. While one participant immigrated to the United States at the age of 25, the remaining five came between the ages of 15 and 16. One participant was born capital city and the rest were from cities located in the south-western part of the country.
Recruitment and access

The recruitment and access process consisted of several stages. First, the study was presented to the principal of my high school requesting permission to recruit a small purposeful sampling of Latina/o families from a monthly Latina/o Parent Leadership Workshop (LPLW) (See Appendix A). Smith et al. (2009) explain that a small sample of five or six is suitable for a depth analysis of data. The school setting is experiencing a demographic change that suits well with the study of family engagement.

Second, an announcement was made to parents at the LPLW to participate in a research-based doctoral study (See Appendix B and C). Parents were asked to contact me directly via my personal telephone or email if they were interested in participating in my study. When parents contacted me on the telephone, I set up a meeting at a place and time convenient for them (See Appendix D and E). As a bilingual speaker, I spoke to parents and guardians individually in Spanish and informed them about three separate interviews, lasting 45 minutes each. At our first meeting, I asked the participants to read and keep the Northeastern IRB approved unsigned informed consent form (See Appendix F). Where parents or guardians were unable to read the form, I read the form aloud to them in Spanish. At the beginning of each interview, the parent was reminded that the purpose of the study was to understand their experiences surrounding the education of their children at the high school.

The interview itself consisted of three parts. The first-day interview lasted nearly forty-five minutes and sought demographic and background information on the parent (See Part I of Protocol Questions in Appendix G). The second-day interview lasted approximately forty-five minutes and consisted of a semi-structured interview (See Part II of Protocol Questions in Appendix G). The third-day interview also lasted approximately forty-five minutes and focused on home-school relations (See Part III of Protocol Questions in Appendix G). During the
interview process, I used a reflexive journal to record thoughts, observations, gestures, facial/body expressions, and impressions that transpired while listening to parents narrate their experiences and stories.

A substantial number of the parents and guardians in the study were undocumented. This population was a vulnerable group. Parents along with their children are often called to present themselves at immigration or request to be accompanied by a school member to court to testify to their civic conduct at the school and community. These families are conscious of how their actions can lead to their detention as well as their deportation, due to poor documentation to reside in the U.S. Given this situation, the ethical principles and guidelines outlined in the Belmont Report that stipulates that researchers should demonstrate respect for individuals, beneficence, and justice was followed.

With regard to respect, there was a need not to disclose parents’ actual names in this study. Pseudonyms to identify the parent and guardian were used. In addition, participating subjects were given the authority to determine if there were any potential risks in the study, and to stop participating in the study at any time.

In terms of beneficence, no harm was done by securing the well-being of all parents. The intention was to cause no physical, psychological, social, legal, or economic harm to the participants, but rather give parents the tools and confidence to voice their interests and concerns in an educational arena they have seldom been invited to participate in. Justice refers to the participants’ equal share in articulating their perceptions in accessing the educational processes for their children, expressing their needs, and demonstrating their engagement. This particular aspect, as required by the Belmont Report, aligned with the over-arching research question: How do immigrant Guatemalan families who have children in a northeastern high school make sense
of their children’s education? The intent of the research was to illuminate new information regarding the access to public education by culturally Latina/o families. Immigrant Guatemalan parents in particular.

In order to be granted Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Northeastern University (NEU), the first step towards complying with university, state, and federal regulations relating to the protection of human subjects was taken. In 2014, the required Human Subject Research Protections training was satisfied (See Appendix H).

These documents met the requirements specified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the IRB. The first requirement was to inform the participants of their right to withdraw at any time from the study on their own volition. A second one was to inform the participants of the purpose of the study. Lastly, participants were informed of what procedures were used in the collection of data. Furthermore, participants knew that information retrieved from the interviews would be protected and secured in a password-secure computer. The interviews were transcribed by me, the researcher. None of the aforementioned steps were executed until presented with a written approval to proceed in my study by Northeastern University’s IRB.

**Data collection**

IPA in this study was concerned with in-depth and detailed accounts of how a small number of immigrant parents make sense of their experiences with a public high school. Smith et al. (2009) stated that the data collection process involved recruiting a small number of participants who had experience with the phenomenon. This study recruited six participants. The study followed a three interview approach, conducted on three separate days, to build an effective rapport and nurture a conversational approach to collect data (Smith et al., 2009).
The purpose of meeting on three separate days was two-fold. First, it allowed me to perform a double-hermeneutic interpretation with each *testimonio* whereby I had the time to purposefully engage in the parents’ story to identify salient depictions of experiences that were unique to each family. My interpretation of each *testimonio* added a new layer of understanding about the complexities of the parents’ experience within the high school. Second, through multiple reflections on each story, I could better understand not only parents’ *testimonio* as a collective struggle, but also my role to enter their fight for a more inclusive and equitable collaboration in their children’s school.

The first-day interview lasted ten to fifteen minutes and I presented the consent form to be signed by the parent. At the same time, demographic and background information on the parent was acquired (See Part I of Protocol Questions in Appendix F). The second-day interview lasted approximately forty-five minutes and consisted of a semi-structured interview (See Part II of Protocol Questions in Appendix F). The third-day interview also lasted approximately forty-five minutes and focused on home-school relations (See Part III of Protocol Questions in Appendix H).

During the interview process, I used a reflexive journal to record thoughts, observations, gestures, facial/body expressions, and impressions that transpired while listening to parents narrate their experiences and stories.

**Data storage**

All primary documents and recordings were kept under lock and key in a file cabinet at my home. Back-up copies were saved on a SanDisk®CruzerGlide USB Flash Drive with Secure Access software also stored under lock and key in a file cabinet at my home. I was the only
person with access to this cabinet. There were also back-up copies of materials stored in Google Drive on my personal computer, which is protected by a username and password.

**Data Analysis**

The analytical focus of this project was to evaluate Latina/o parents’ ability to make sense of their involvement in their children’s high school education (Smith et al., 2009). Although there was no set approach for data analysis in IPA, Smith et al. (2009) provided novice researchers a six-step guideline for analysing data. The six steps include: (1) reading and rereading interview transcripts, (2) noting data interpretation, (3) studying the development of emergent themes, (4) searching for connections across emergent themes, (5) moving to the next case, and (6) looking for patterns across cases.

Step one began with reading and reading the interview transcripts to immerse myself in the parents’ stories and become actively engaged in their experiences. Listening to the recordings while silently reading the transcripts also gave these transcripts a unique voice and identity (Smith et al., 2013). Smith et al. suggested that during this stage, as the researcher can “begin the process of entering the participant’s world, it is important to enter a phase of active engagement with the data” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 82). During this phase, I recorded personal remarks on the interview experience or observations about the transcript (Smith et al., 2009).

Phase two included initial noting and data interpretation. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) described three levels of interpretation that were included in this research: descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual. The descriptive level was largely dependent upon narrative details and less on interpretation. Secondly, the linguistic level was focused on the literal terms of the interview transcripts. The final level, conceptual analysis, captured the interpretative process.
Phase three included the analysis of transcript codes and the development of emerging themes. In this phase, the narrative flow of the transcript was broken up and grouped into themes. Saldaña’s (2013) description of axial coding is similar to phase two. This is to say, the transcript in its entirety was purposefully rearranged into parts, or themes, that created a new text of analysis. During the process, I immersed myself more into the analysis as well as the lived experiences of the parents (Smith et al. 2009), culminating in an interpretative study that included both the parents’ and my collaborative efforts (Smith et al., 2009, p. 92).

Phase four established patterns or themes within the transcript. IPA does not prescribe a level of analysis for this phase so I could choose the organization of the analysis. My research questions governed the themes to structure the important aspects of the parents’ experiences and stories (Smith et al., 2009).

Phase five allowed me to bracket my experiences and assumptions acquired from the analysis of the previous transcript. It was critical that I did justice to the preceding case on its own individuality (Smith et al., 2009). In other words, each interview was coded and analysed independently and systematically.

Phase six, the final step, involved looking for patterns across all cases and looking for connections. This involved a “reconfiguring and relabelling of themes” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 101).

**Trustworthiness**

A study that is worth paying attention to is one that can be considered trustworthy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking was one way to ensure that this study met the criteria of trustworthiness. Latina/o parents who participated in my study were approached at the end of the interview and asked to examine the data to verify its validity and accuracy. This conversation
occurred at a location convenient for the parent to make any necessary correction or elaborate on presented materials. For those parents and guardians who were illiterate, member checking was conducted orally.
Chapter 4: Report of Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to use qualitative analysis and semi-structured interviews to examine the experience of six immigrant Guatemalan parents and guardians who have a child in a public high school. Adhering to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) tradition, this study used a purposeful sampling in order for all participants to have a shared experience (Smith et al., 2009). An analysis for each participant’s unique lived experiences gained depth through the use of a reflective journal, analysis of the recorded interview, and examination of the transcriptions.

IPA in this study was concerned with in-depth and detailed account of how a small number of immigrant parents make sense of their experiences with a public high school. Smith et al. (2009) stated that the data collection process involved recruiting a small number of participants that had experience with the phenomenon. This study recruited six participants and followed a three interview approach, conducted on three separate days, to build an effective rapport and nurture a conversational approach to collect data (Smith et al., 2009). All the interviews were recorded at a location convenient to the participant and they were transcribed into Spanish within two days. The Spanish transcription was then transcribed into English a few days later. An analysis for each participant’s unique lived experiences gained depth through the use of a reflective journal, analysis of the recorded interview, and a purposeful rearrangement of the transcriptions into parts, or themes, that created a new text of analysis.

The analysis of data presented in this chapter is in the form of testimonios, counter-narratives (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001), produced by immigrant and undocumented parents and guardians. All six participants in this study narrated detailed accounts of their experiences living in Guatemala, coming to the U.S. and interacting with school members. In order to understand families’ experiences with the public school system, this study was guided by the overarching
and sub-questions: How do immigrant Guatemalan families who have children in a northeastern high school make sense of their child’s education?

- How does racism shape the experiences of Guatemalan parents/families at my high school?
- How do Guatemalan families use their cultural capital in schools?
- How does the high school empower Guatemalan families?

The interview questions were designed around these questions in order to identify themes. These themes were then examined within the literature review of this study to discern divergences and convergences in the extant literature regarding Latina/o family engagement. This chapter is divided into the two parts: background information on each participant and prominent themes common across the testimonios.

Participants

Six immigrant Guatemalan parents and guardians participated in this study. All participants were residents of the same northeastern city and had at least one child enrolled in the public high school. Their ages ranged from 28 to 40. Five of the participants had immigrated to the United States between the ages of 15 and 16 while one participant immigrated at the age of 25. Four participants were undocumented, one participant received his residency card two years ago, and one participant had received his residency card one day before our first interview and after 13 years residing in the United States. All six interviews were conducted in Spanish. Table 1 provides background information on each participant. The names of participants and any third parties were given a pseudonym to protect privacy. The participants are presented in the order they were interviewed.
Table 1

*Participants’ Profile*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Participant</th>
<th>David</th>
<th>Luz</th>
<th>Antonio</th>
<th>Roberto</th>
<th>Esperanza</th>
<th>Dolores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Uncle</td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>Widow</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth place</td>
<td>Jutiapa</td>
<td>Guatemala City</td>
<td>Esquintla</td>
<td>San Rafael Flores</td>
<td>Salama, but grew up in Peten</td>
<td>Jutiapa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth place of parent</td>
<td>Father: ?</td>
<td>Mother: Coban</td>
<td>Parents: Jalapa</td>
<td>Father: San Rafael Flores</td>
<td>Parents: ?</td>
<td>Mother: Santa Catarina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>highest level of education completed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6, interrupted education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6, interrupted education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>highest level of education completed by parents</td>
<td>Father: 0</td>
<td>Mother: 1</td>
<td>Father: 3</td>
<td>Father: 3</td>
<td>Father: 0</td>
<td>Father: ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occupation</td>
<td>works in a car dealership</td>
<td>housewife/babysitter</td>
<td>warehouse worker and Night street cleaner</td>
<td>carpenter</td>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s occupation</td>
<td>Mother: fieldworker</td>
<td>Mother: fieldworker</td>
<td>Father: raised livestock</td>
<td>Both parents worked in the fields</td>
<td>Father: fieldworker</td>
<td>Mother: housewife</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

David. David was a 36-year-old father who had a daughter in 10th grade. He was born in El Progreso in Jutiapa, Guatemala. As far as he remembered, his parents and grandparents were from Escuintla. He immigrated to the United States at the age of 15. He came alone, leaving his mother, father and sister in Escuintla. The reason for leaving Escuintla was poverty. David as
well as his parents wanted a better future for him. David’s dominant language is Spanish and he expressed discomfort speaking English because he never had the opportunity to study it at school. While his mother never attended school, his father completed third grade. David lamented that on his way to work in the mornings, his father would deviate from the path to go drink. The mother was strong. She was able to carry pumps of insecticide on her back to spray fields. Like his father, David completed third grade and then began to work alongside his mother. The parents had their children leave school to work in the fields with them out of necessity. David lived in Massachusetts with his wife, also from Escuintla, and three daughters who were born in the U.S. David was undocumented and worked 90-100 hours at a gasoline station for 12 years and lately worked a 40-hour shift in a car dealership. The interview was conducted in a reserved study room in the public library.

**Luz.** Luz was a 33-year-old mother who had a son in the 10th grade. She was born in Guatemala City, Zone 12. Guatemala City is broken into 25 zones. Zone 12 has had a high crime rate for years. Luz immigrated at the age of 16 to the United States with her one-year-old son. Her husband arrived to Massachusetts eight years earlier and had saved enough money to pay for her and their child’s travel to the United States. Luz left her two sisters behind in Guatemala. The reason for leaving Guatemala was to find a better life and reunite with her husband. Luz’s predominant language was Spanish and she did not speak English. Luz’s father abandoned the family when she was an infant. The mother was born in Coban and had married three times, hoping that a husband would respect her and provide for her and her children. Luz had two sisters who had different fathers. Common to all three sisters was the mother who attended school until second grade. The mother left Coban to go find better prospects in the city of Guatemala. The mother died at the age of 33. At this time Luz completed third grade and began
to work by running errands in the neighborhood. At a young age, Luz was taken in by a family who needed housecleaning and child care. It was in this household that Luz met her future husband. Luz was undocumented. In addition to her 10th grade Guatemalan-born son, Luz had a ten-month infant born in the U.S. When in the U.S., Luz had worked as a babysitter and was presently at home with her infant child. She intended to return to work once her child turned one. The interview was conducted in the privacy of her home.

**Antonio.** Antonio was a 28-year-old uncle with a nephew in ninth grade. Antonio was born in Escuintla, Guatemala. He immigrated to the United States at the age of 16. He came alone leaving his parents behind. The reason for leaving Escuintla was to escape poverty, crime, and discrimination. Antonio’s parents had a small plot of land where they grew tobacco. The parents were originally from Jalapa, but in the 1940s the government gave people small plots of land in the southern part of the country. The year he immigrated to the U.S. the family’s crop did not grow. Antonio found himself possessing absolutely nothing and he had no other choice but to leave his parcel of land and come to the U.S. In Guatemala, Antonio always heard gunshots throughout the night and early morning. He would have his chickens stolen at night. Given Antonio’s somewhat effeminate character and manners, he was a victim of other men’s *machismo* in local stores which cautioned him to keep to himself and refrain from much contact with others. Antonio’s primary language was Spanish and he didn’t speak English. He attended school until third grade. His father also studied to third grade and his mother never went to school. Both parents worked together in the fields. Antonio and his brothers left school at an early age to work alongside the parents. Antonio lived in Massachusetts with his female partner, their two daughters and their recently arrived 17-year-old nephew who attended the public high school. Antonio received his residency card a day before our interview and after 13 years living
in the United States. Antonio had two jobs. He worked loading trucks with fruit in a warehouse during the day and at night he worked picking up garbage. The interview was conducted in a reserved study room in the public library.

Roberto. Roberto was a 28-year-old father of a daughter in 11th grade. He was born in San Rafael de Flores, Guatemala. He immigrated to the United States at the age of 16. He was first to arrive in the U.S. early in 2001 and ten months later his wife and daughter joined him. The reason for leaving Guatemala was to escape violence, the political climate, and find a better life for the family. Roberto’s body had been pierced by five bullets on several occasions that ranged from acts of general violence to political rivalries. Roberto said he did not belong to the popular party and his townsmen encouraged him to run for mayor. Rivalry in the opposing party resulted in Roberto being seriously injured by gunfire. Roberto was keen on going to school and left after eighth grade to help the family. He worked setting cobblestones on the streets and then in a mechanic’s shop. Roberto’s father attended school until the third grade and his mother was never given the opportunity to study. Roberto’s predominant language was Spanish. His father and mother spoke Quiche. Roberto spoke a limited English he learned while working on the job with his boss. Roberto was undocumented and was fearful of deportation. He learned to be a carpenter and currently worked as a handyman. The interview was conducted in a reserved study room in the public library.

Esperanza. Esperanza was a 43-year-old widow of a daughter in ninth grade. She was born in Salama, but raised in the Petén, Guatemala. She immigrated to the United States at the age of 25 leaving behind two infants and two pre-school girls. The reason for leaving Guatemala was primarily to survive, escape violence, and discrimination. When her four daughters were infants and toddlers, her husband was assassinated. Esperanza learned of the identity of her
husband’s assassins and feared they would come looking for her. She experienced having been mugged at gunpoint along with other women when they were returning home from work at 4:00 a.m. on a bus. In fear of losing her life and leaving her children without a parent, Esperanza chose to immigrate to the U.S. Neither one of Esperanza’s parents went to school. Similarly, Esperanza did not have the opportunity to attend school. Esperanza worked in the fields with her parents. Esperanza was undocumented. Through her church in the U.S., Esperanza met her partner and had a child who was one-year-old. The interview was conducted in the privacy of her home.

**Dolores.** Dolores was a 35-year-old mother of a daughter in ninth grade. She was born in Jutiapa, Guatemala and immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 25, leaving behind her mother, smaller siblings and four-year-old daughter. Dolores left Guatemala to find a better life to support her mother and save her daughter’s life. Dolores’s father died at the age of 17, leaving his wife to support five children. Dolores was the eldest and always felt responsible for her younger siblings and for taking care of her mother. Although Dolores attended school until sixth grade, she continuously left school to take care of her siblings and work with her mother. As a child, Dolores witnessed how her father physically abused her mother. Dolores helped her mother raise the children, keep house, and sell home-made plant ornaments at the market. Her mother was a housewife who studied until third grade. Dolores was undocumented. The interview was conducted in a reserved study room at the public library.

**Thematic Structure**

In following the six-step guideline for analysing data in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the transcripts were read more than once to enter the participant’s world and engage actively with the data to extract a pattern of themes common in all interviews (Smith, et
al, 2009). While the purposive sampling was modest, the results were not representative of Guatemalan parents who have a child in a public high school. What the results provide is an understanding of how families’ unique challenges in life resort to a common sacrifice that underscores their strengths. This data analysis resulted in eight broad themes grouped into three domains: Racism/Discrimination, Cultural Capital, Latino school engagement. An overarching theme that ties all three domains together is resilience. Parents’ and guardians’ self-sacrifice for the well-being of their spouse and children is constant throughout all the themes. Navigating through new social, cultural, educational, and professional spaces the participants in this study demonstrate a determination, resiliency, and optimism against the pressures and obstacles in their community.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Overarching theme</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Race-based Exclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Poverty and lack of education</td>
<td>How does racism shape the experiences of Guatemalan parents/families at my high school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. (Im)Migration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Legal Status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cultural capital</td>
<td>Resilience</td>
<td>5. Education and Educación at home</td>
<td>How do Guatemalan families use their cultural capital in schools?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. Familism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Latina/o Family Engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td>7. Latina/o parent workshops</td>
<td>How does the high school empower Guatemalan families?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8. En la unión hay fuerza / Strength is found in the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the next section of this chapter, the themes identified in Table 2 will be elaborated upon. Direct quotations from the transcriptions and observations written in the reflective journal will be used as supporting evidence and to reflect the participants’ experiences, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions (Smith et al., 2009). Non-verbal utterances and significant pauses noted in the reflective journal are bracketed in the transcription. To bring forth the voices of the silent participants, I report their direct narration in Spanish and in italics. A translation of this in English is provided in quotation marks.

The purpose of this chapter is to dissect the central events in participants’ lives to understand the challenges they face when educating their adolescent at an American high school. This requires an exploration of participants’ recollection of their schooling and their parents’ involvement, or lack of, their reasons for coming the U.S., and their experiences with their child’s high school. Despite race-based exclusionary circumstances both in their home and host communities and at school, the families provide strong support for their children at home. Educators and school policies do not always recognize the linguistic and cultural wealth students bring to the classroom (Yosso, 2005) and parents’ active participation in their children’s education (Delgado-Gaitán, 2012). It is my intention to voice the stories of immigrant Guatemalan families whose presence in my school district is growing and hope that my colleagues will adopt new strategies to incorporate cultural awareness in their practice. Furthermore, this study hopes to demonstrate the importance of implementing a systemic approach to Latina/o parent engagement.

**Domain 1: Race-based Exclusion**

Racism is rooted in Guatemala’s history, institutions, and social structure that has persisted from the colonial period to present day. The basis of this racism has instituted an
internal form of apartheid which is broadly divided between the lighter skinned ladinos (descended from a combination of Spanish and European blood with native Guatemalans) and the darker skinned indigenous peoples descended from the Maya (M.C. Rendón, personal communication, October 13, 2015). The Peace Accords (1996), which ended the 36-year-long civil war, addressed an on-going shift in the country from a racist to a multicultural state wherein Maya Guatemalans would strengthen their knowledge of their own culture, language, and identity (Brett, 2010; Jiménez Estrada, 2012). This blanket of long-standing oppression is embedded in the social, political, and institutional structures of the country, keeping each participant in a series of inequalities found in poverty, education, immigration, status, and language.

Theme 1: Poverty and lack of education. Poverty and lack of education are closely linked and reflect the social exclusion that all the participants suffered in Guatemala. Owing to their lack of resources, which in turn affected their ability to receive a good education, much less complete one, many of this study's participants have borne the brunt of exclusion. Exclusion from being able to receive a good education and exclusion from being able to rise from the lowest rungs in the Guatemalan social structure. Poverty was the reason for participants leaving school at an early age to work alongside either a parent or both parents.
## Table 3

*Spanish/English Direct Quotes Reflecting How Poverty Impacted Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td><em>Por la pobreza no nos permitiría quedar en la escuela.</em> Due to the poverty, we could not stay in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luz</td>
<td><em>Mi mama trabajaba de lavar, planchar, y atortillar - trabajos muy pesados, muy difíciles Le ayude con los oficios en vez de ir a la escuela.</em> My mother worked washing clothes, ironing and making tortillas. These were hard jobs, but she got us ahead by doing them. I helped her in these jobs instead of going to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio</td>
<td><em>Iba a dejar a las vacas en el campo antes de ir a la escuela y cuando regresaba a la una tenía que amarrar a los chivos y después hacia la comida. Y conforme que me hacia grande, tenía que ir trabajando.</em> I would leave the cows in the fields before going to school and when I came back at one o’clock I had to tie up the sheep and then prepare lunch. As I got older, I had to go work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberto</td>
<td><em>A veces las circunstancias y situaciones no nos permitian continuar estudiando. Fui a ayudar a mis padres, me puse a trabajar.</em> Sometimes the circumstances and situations do not allow us to continue our studies. I [left school] to help my parents, I went to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esperanza</td>
<td><em>Yo como no estudiante, no tuve la oportunidad de estudiar...yo solo fui hasta el tercer grado. Tenía que trabajar para dar a mis hermanitos...Mi papa nunca estudió...mi mamá se crió sin mamá y sin papá [nunca estudió].</em> I never studied, I didn’t have the opportunity to study...I only went until third grade. I had to work to help have food for my younger brother and sisters...My father never studied....my mother was raised without a mother and father [she never studied].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolores</td>
<td><em>Estudié hasta el seis grado, pero no fue continuo. A veces tuve que quedarme para ayudar a mi mamá porque había muchos pequeños [en casa]...mis padres nunca fueron a la escuela..eran inalfabetos.</em> I went to school until sixth grade, but it was not continuous. On occasions, I had to stay at home to help my mother because there were many small children...my parents never went to school, they were uneducated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Subtheme: Poorly funded schools.** While the Peace Accord (1996) intended to increase primary school enrollment, a discrepancy still existed in the level of grade attainment between Indigenous and Spanish speaking people. The former received up to 4 years of schooling while the latter received up to 7 years (World Bank, 2013). While the participants in this study all said they were not part of the indigenous class, nor did they see themselves as such, this is because of the strong stigma attached to belonging to the Indian world. While they may have physical features that look native (like Mayans), they were on the whole brought up wearing western clothing and speaking Spanish. This, the first step to national assimilation, and an attempt to rise through the elaborate social system, does not free them from long-established prejudices and negative attitudes. On the whole, their parents’ educational attainment coupled with their own limited and interrupted education indicates how the community schools in their communities were poorly funded by the government even though all speak a passable Spanish, are literate and have rudimentary writing skills. Curiously, only Roberto, whose parents spoke Quiche, is the one who achieved the highest educational benchmark. That is, he completed eighth grade. Antonio’s and Dolores’s schooling were interrupted at the level of sixth grade, while David, Luz, and Esperanza only attended school until third grade. Like many other societies, where farming and labor is of the essence for survival, these individuals were pulled out of school by their parents since their labor was needed. Poverty and the necessity to work at a young age prevented the participants to attend school and complete a degree.

**Subtheme: Participants’ families’ interactions with the school.** In terms of parents visiting the participants’ primary school in Guatemala, Luz reported that her Aunt never visited the school. Similarly, Dolores recalled that her mother never visited her teachers at school either. Esperanza’s parents also never visited the school and she provided a brief reason for this: *Como*
“Since they [my parents] received no schooling, they never went to my school. My father never studied. They taught him the alphabet and he learned how to write his name with a little book. It was worse for my mother [because] she grew up without a mother or father. Both of them [my parents] are illiterate.”

Despite a truncated primary education, the remaining three participants remembered their parents visiting their school and having different experiences. David’s mother only went to her son’s school when invited to a meeting. The few times she went she always felt uncomfortable because the teachers rudely positioned her as inferior to them. Consequently, she listened to what was said to her rather than ask questions. Antonio’s parents were too busy working in the fields to follow up on their son’s education at the school. The thought of going to the school never crossed the father’s mind as he believed it was the duty of the mother to attend to school matters. The mother, however, went seldom to the school. Roberto’s parents were cognizant of their son’s schooling at home only in terms of his behaviour. They never asked about his reading, writing, or mathematics. Roberto’s father, like Antonio’s, felt it was the mother’s responsibility to go to the school, which she did when her son did something wrong.
Table 4

Spanish/English Direct Quotes of Parents Visiting Participants’ Primary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td><em>Ella [mi mamá] iba a las reuniones pero como le digo a veces hay maestros que son rudos. Ellos lo que contestan a veces es “aquí yo soy el maestro y quien sabe cosas no son ustedes.”</em> Entonces había una clara separación donde los maestros se sentían un poco más altos que los demás. She [my mother] used to go to the [school] meeting but as I told you sometimes the teachers were rude. They’d say things like: “Here, I am the teacher and you're not the one who knows anything.” There was a clear separation between the teachers, who felt they were a little more than everyone else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio</td>
<td><em>Ellos [mis padres] estaban muy ocupados [para ir a la escuela a visitar a los maestros]. Mi padre jamás iría. Eso todavía existe allá. Esa cosa de machismo que dice que cosas de mujeres es de ir a reuniones.</em> They [my parents] were too busy [to go visit my teachers at school]. My father would have never gone. That still exists a lot over there. That machismo business that says it’s women’s business to go to [school] meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberto</td>
<td><em>Allá [en Guatemala] es bastante diferente. Allá, ellos van solamente si uno comete un error. Mi papá siempre preguntaba y mi mamá siempre iba a preguntar. “Como van los patojos? Cómo se están comportando?</em> It was a lot different there [in Guatemala]. There, parents only go [to their child’s school] if you make an error or do something bad. My father always asked and my mother would go to school and ask: “How are the kids doing? How are they behaving?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants’ parents lacked a culture or expectation of what it meant to be involved in their children’s schooling. They had no encouragement from the school systems to take part in the classroom and they had no resources at home to support any academic work. When the participants’ mothers went to their child’s school to speak with a teacher it was through an invitation to discuss behavior. An absence of a conversation around the well-being of the child along with his or her academic progress has impacted how the participants witnessed their
families’ involvement with their schools, which in turn influences their relationships with school staff in the US.

Table 5

*Spanish/English Direct Quotes of Parents’ Participation in Their Child's High School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **David**   | *Cuando me avisan voy. Usted [la investigadora] siempre me llama a sus reuniones y siempre estoy.*  
When I’m told about it [a meeting with a teacher or a school event], I go. You [the researcher] always call me for your meetings and I’m always there. |
| **Luz**     | *La visitamos nada más cuando tenemos una reunión o usted [la investigadora] nos llama para ir a su reunión. También hemos ido la noche de conocer a todos los maestros.*  
We only go when there is a meeting or when you [the researcher] phone us and invite us to your meeting. Also, we’ve been to the evening to meet the teachers. |
| **Antonio** | *No he participado en eventos de la escuela porque, principalmente, no hablo el inglés.*  
I haven’t participated in any school events mainly because I don’t speak English. |
| **Roberto** | *Hemos ido a las Puerta Abiertas de la escuela. Aparte de esto, no hemos ido muy frecuente.*  
We have been to the Open Doors at the school. Otherwise we have not been often. |
| **Esperanza** | *Me gustaría venir a la escuela. Para ver cómo le va a ella con sus trabajos, aunque yo no puedo ayudarla porque no se inglés. Pues, yo confío en ustedes. Ustedes son los que les está ayudando. Yo vine sola una vez a las Puertas Abiertas. Me gustó mucho.*  
I’d like to come to the high school. I’d like to see how my daughter is doing with her work, even if I cannot help her because I don’t know English. Well, I trust in you. I have come only once to the Open Doors. I liked it a lot. |
| **Dolores** | *Cuando me llaman para una reunión siempre puedo estar. Me gusta asistir y estar informada. He venido como dos veces.*  
I am always present when I’m called to a meeting. I like to be informed. I have come about two times. |
**Subtheme: Participants' interactions with the school.** As a parent or guardian with an adolescent in an American high school, David, Luz, and Dolores only have gone to the school when they were asked to attend a meeting for their child or they were invited to the Latino Parent Leadership Workshop. The act of responding to a school invitation is reminiscent of their families’ involvement in their schools when they were children. This is to say, the participants, like their parents, respond to invitations from the school. The participants, like their parents, do not initiate a two-way dialogue. This is understandable given that at the meeting with educators, the participants said they were all pleased to have an interpreter present. Not speaking English was the main deterrent to assisting school functions.

In the two years his daughter has attended the high school, Roberto had only gone to the high school twice, each time to Open Door night to meet his daughter's teachers. During these evenings, Roberto learned about his daughter and eagerly sought this information in a passive manner. Accompanied by his daughter who interpreted for him, Roberto listened to teachers’ positive comments regarding his child. However, Roberto never asked penetrating questions in respect to his daughter’s capacities, educational pathways, and opportunities at the school and wider community.

Esperanza recognized she never came to the school because she did not know any English, yet she showed deference towards the educators. This high respect for teachers opens a possibility for connecting with educators that goes unrecognized by both parents and educators. An understanding of this needs to be incorporated into teachers’ practices. Esperanza is as poorly educated as her parents, yet she wants to know how her daughter is doing at school and possibly learn what more she can do at home to support her daughter at school. Dolores expressed how she likes to be informed about her daughter as well. Though she had been to the
high school only twice during the school year, she yearns to be present for her daughter both at school and at home.

**Subtheme: Communication with the school.** When the participants needed to communicate with the school to report their child would be absent from school or to inquire about their children’s academic progress, all participants shared a similar view, yet took a different approach. All the participants depended on a Spanish speaker to communicate with the school. Who they relied on depended on different individuals. David called and relied on the Family Engagement Specialist who spoke Spanish. Luz depended on her husband who had a better grasp on English to communicate her concerns. Antonio depended on his nephew, who had matriculated into the school system eight months ago. Also, Roberto depended on his daughter. Esperanza trusted all the educators to the extent that she did not telephone the school. Dolores depended on the guidance counselor who spoke Spanish.

**Theme 2: (Im)Migration.** Indigenous Mayan Guatemalans have a history of both migration and immigration. Years of conflict between the military government and Mayan civilians resulted in well documented war of genocide against this population (Jiménez Estrada, 2012). The United Fruit Company, was one of these multinationals and numerous private coffee and sugar producers at a national level (Bret, 2010). During these migrations, Mayan Guatemalans changed their identities by wearing Western clothing and speaking Spanish rather than their dialects (Brett, 2010; Jiménez Estrada, 2012). The long battle to assimilate this population through schooling, military service and work opportunities was insufficient to keep ethnic Mayan safe (M.C. Rendon, personal communication, October 13, 2015). This was further compounded by U.S. Foreign Policy, which viewed indigenous Guatemalans as communist, when in fact, they were farmers, weavers, and peasants (M.C. Rendon, personal communication,
October 13, 2015). Furthermore, given the wealth of opportunities to the north, mainly the U.S. and Canada, many Guatemalans sought not only asylum in the U.S., but also came in order to earn more money and have better lives (INEDIM, 2013). It is important to keep this backdrop present to understand the racialized complexity of Guatemalans migrating to the US, including the participants in this study. The interviews in this study chronicle the socio-political and economic climate that spurred participants’ need to leave their home country.

**Subtheme: Political and social unrest.** All participants in this study contribute to a wave of immigrants who left Guatemala owing to issues of political instability, violence experienced first-hand, lack of better options and desperation. David, Luz, Antonio, and Dolores left the country because of poverty and a lack of opportunities to improve their situation. Roberto and Esperanza left the country because of political stability and violent crime. All the participants left family and personal belongings behind primarily to seek a better life in a faraway country.

Table 6

*Spanish/English Direct Quotes of Participants’ Reason for Leaving Home Country*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>David</strong></td>
<td><em>Sali de Guatemala por la pobreza. En casa no teníamos nada</em>&lt;br&gt;I left Guatemala because of the poverty. At home we had nothing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Luz</strong></td>
<td><em>Vine a este país para estar con mi marido y salir de mi situación tan pobre</em>&lt;br&gt;I came to this country to be with my husband and to get away from my poor conditions,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Antonio</strong></td>
<td><em>Decidí venir porque por la simple razón de que...perdí toda mi cosecha...no me quedó más salida que venirme acá.</em>&lt;br&gt;I decided to come owing to a simple reason..I lost my whole harvest... I had no other option but to come here.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Dolores**| *Decidí venir acá para ayudar a mi mama y a mi hija .......teníamos nada. No teníamos comida para todos.*<br>I decided to come here to help my mother and my little daughter … we had nothing. There was not enough food for all of us.
According to the 2013 Instituto de Estudios y Divulgación sobre Migración, A.C (INEDIM), 1, 637,119 Guatemalans left their homelands because of minimal opportunities to find a job and political instability. Roberto highlights the political climate stating *Esto fue más que discriminación por el motivo de que mi hirieron de balas sin tener ningún delito...Teníamos miedo de la rivalidad de la política.* “This was more than just discrimination for having been shot by bullets when I hadn’t committed a crime….We were afraid of the political rivalry.” Political instability in Guatemala is not divorced from criminal violence that creates a climate of fear and desperation.

Esperanza recalled *[yo]trabajaba con miedo porque...me dijeron quien habían sido [los asesinos de marido]. No quería que mis hijas se queden sin madre y padre. Decidí para venirme porque era como sacar adelante a mis hijas.* “I worked in fear...they told me who they were (the assassins of my husband). I didn’t want my daughters to be without a mother and father. I decided to come here because it was the only way to help my daughters.”

Antonio also felt a need to help his 17-year-old nephew Jose who witnessed the shooting of his father, was told who the assassins were, and was desperate to find a way out. In a long-distance telephone conversation José told his uncle, *Tío eso me duele y no puedo hacer nada...ayúdame porque yo no puedo. Viera tío si usted no me da una mano, yo de una manera u otra me voy. Porque mis hermanos aquí están aguantando hambre* “Uncle that hurts and I can’t do anything about it. Listen uncle, if you don’t give me a hand, I’ll find a way of getting up there on my own ...help me because I can’t. My brothers and sisters are passing hungry.”

**Subtheme: Crossing borders.** All participants left Guatemala on foot to come to the U.S. Most of them had limited resources, but all borrowed money to come north, the mythical "el norte." Although they may have ridden buses or trains for short periods of time, their journey
with the expensive "coyotes" (guides) required stamina and a willingness to undergo danger, hunger, and extreme weather conditions. Given the clandestine nature of attempting to enter one of the most powerful countries in the world, and their own limited resources, their most effective way and only chance, was to attempt it on foot.
Table 7

**Spanish/English Direct Quotes of Participants’ Exodus of Guatemala**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>David</strong></td>
<td><em>En Guatemala, al nomás llegar a la edad de 15-16 años, todo el mundo se viene. Yo llegue como muchos otros caminando.</em> When people barely turn 15-16 in Guatemala, they begin to make their way here. Like many others, I came walking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Luz</strong></td>
<td><em>Salimos de Guatemala caminando, luego subimos un bus, y otra vez caminando, y por último avión.</em> We left Guatemala walking, then we got on a bus, then we walked again, and finally we took an aeroplane.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Antonio</strong></td>
<td><em>Vine por tierra, caminando, cruzando fronteras. Salí de Guatemala caminando, en bus, y todo, cruce así como un inmigrante.</em> I came by land, walking on foot, crossing borders. I left Guatemala on foot, then took a bus, and all that, and then I crossed over as an immigrant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roberto</strong></td>
<td><em>En si en si la idea de nosotros era emigrar para tener una vida más tranquila, con más seguro, y poderles dar un futuro mejor a nuestras hijas. Salí primero, caminando y cruzando fronteras.</em> Little by little we began to think that the idea of our immigrating (here) might bring us a more peaceful life. A more secure life so we could give our daughters a better future. I came first, walking and crossing boundaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Esperanza</strong></td>
<td><em>Yo camine Guatemala, México. Salí de Petén a México, de México camine de noche con chupitos de agua, camine 18 horas en un furgón donde me tire a la parte de abajo, no comí ni nada durante las 18 horas. Hasta llegar a un lugar, no se donde y allí volvimos a quedarnos otra vez en el monte. Venian muchas personas.</em> I walked the length of Guatemala and Mexico. I left the Petén for Mexico, and I walked through Mexico at night only taking little bits of water on the way. I walked 18 hours. I also threw myself under a container and had nothing to eat for 18 hours. We then got to a place, I have no idea where, and there we hid in the countryside again. There were a lot of people coming (and making their way to the United States).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dolores</strong></td>
<td><em>Tenía que irme [de Guatemala]. Ese viaje fue muy triste y doloroso porque uno sufre mucho. [Uno] arriesga su vida. Camine mucho. Pase tres días y cuatro noches en el desierto caminando sin parar. Tengo mis piernas con cicatrices por tanto caminar. El pantalón se rompió de la costura [señala con las manos sus tejanos, mostrando la parte de la cadera hacia abajo]. Las piernas se me abrieron pero tenía que seguir.</em> I had to leave [Guatemala]. That was a very sad and painful journey because one suffers a lot. [One] risks one’s life. I walked a lot. I spent three days and four nights in the desert, walking without stopping. I have scars on my legs from walking so much. The stitches on my trousers broke [she motions the part of her jeans from the hips down with her hands]. The legs of my trousers opened up but I had to keep on going.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 8

**Spanish/English Direct Quotes of Participants’ Struggle With Legal Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **Luz**     | *Sin papeles aquí no hay como una libertad poder entrar donde quiera que yo vaya. Es algo que me ha hecho sentir triste y como a la vez frustrada porque yo entiendo el inglés pero lo entiendo así por palabras separadas pero a hablar - eso es muy difícil.*  
Without papers here I don’t feel free to enter wherever I want. I am saddened and frustrated at the same time because I understand English but I understand it by separate words and I’d really like to speak. I feel that is too hard. |
| **Roberto** | *Lo más difícil de vivir aquí es que estamos seguros de una manera de la que en realidad no hay en nuestros países, pero el miedo que tenemos es que no estamos libres, no andamos libres, no podemos salir con la cabeza alta a cualquier parte. Tenemos que agacharla. Manejamos con cuidado y eso es una presión que tenemos que no nos deja muy tranquilos. No podemos decidir comprar una casa, hacer una inversión, no podemos hacer muchas cosas si no estamos legal.*  
The most difficult thing about living here is that we are never sure of where we stand. We feel safe in a way we do not in our countries, but at the same time we are afraid because we are not free. (Owing to our status) we cannot walk out anywhere with our heads held high. We have to lower our heads. We have to drive with care and that is a pressure and we do not feel calm. We cannot decide to buy a house, make an investment, we cannot do a lot of things because we are not legal. |
| **Esperanza** | *Lo único difícil [de vivir aquí] es no tener papeles.*     |
| **Dolores** | *Sin papeles cuesta hacer cosas.*  
Without my documentation, it is hard to do things. |

**Theme 3: Legal status.** Only two of the participants had legal status: David and Antonio. A day before our scheduled interview Antonio received his green card. While happy about his new status, Antonio recognized the struggle of being undocumented: *no podemos hacer*
muchas cosas si no estamos legal. “We cannot do many things if we are not legal.” The other four participants also expressed frustrations of being undocumented.

**Theme 4: Language.** All participants were cognizant that their limited English proficiency prevented them from holding a job and establishing a relationship with educators and fully experiencing life in the United States.
Table 9

Spanish/English Direct Quotes of Participants' Awareness of English Language Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td><em>Aquí veo que necesito inglés para comunicarme mejor y tener mejor puesto en el trabajo.....</em> Es algo incómodo cuando nos llaman [de la escuela] en inglés y no entiendo. Pero yo siempre regreso la llamada. Tengo su número de teléfono para llamar si necesito información. I notice that here I need English to communicate and to have a better position at work.....It is, though, uncomfortable when someone calls [from the school] in English and I don’t understand. But I always return a call and I have your telephone number to call if I need information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luz</td>
<td><em>El inglés es una barrera. Pues sí como la verdad es que no he ido a la escuela. No me he comunicado con la escuela [porque] no puedo expresarme o no lo hablo bien.</em> Not knowing English is certainly a setback. And yes, so, I truthfully haven’t been able to go to school. I haven’t been in touch with the school [because] I cannot express myself in English or speak well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio</td>
<td><em>Lo difícil es el idioma porque no he podido estudiar...es muy necesario hablarlo...y por eso le digo a mis hijos que aprendan...que aprendan</em> What is difficult is the language because I did not study...it is very important to speak it...that is why I tell my children to learn...to learn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberto</td>
<td><em>Cuando alguien de la escuela se pone en contacto con nosotros es un poco frustrante porque no hablamos el inglés. Nos comunicamos con la escuela por medio de mi hija.</em> When someone at school contacts us it is a bit frustrating because we do not speak English. Our daughter helps us communicate with the school. <em>El temor es algo que define al guatemalteco. Hay temor en Guatemala y por eso sale la gente. Vienen aquí y vuelven a encontrar el temor en cuanto a ir tranquilamente por las calles y hay temor en las escuelas porque nadie les hablara porque no hablan el inglés.</em> Fear is something that defines the Guatemalan. There is fear in Guatemala and that is the reason people leave. They come here and find fear once more instead of wandering calmly through the streets. There is also fear at school because no one talks with us because we do not speak English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esperanza</td>
<td><em>Me gustaría [visitar la escuela de mi hija] para ver cómo va ella en sus trabajos, aunque yo no puedo ayudarles porque no se inglés. [Hablar el inglés] es algo que le hace falta a uno.</em> I would like [to visit my daughter’s school] to see how she is doing in her work, although I cannot help her because I don’t know any English. [Speaking English] is something one needs to know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolores</td>
<td><em>El inglés es una barrera. En la escuela solo hablo con usted y la consejera que me hablan en español.</em> Not speaking English is a barrier. At the school I only speak with you and the counselor who talk to me in Spanish.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Domain 2: Cultural Wealth

Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) (Yosso, 2005) recognizes that families of color possess a knowledge built on their experiences. Participants’ voices identified a cultural knowledge that valued education and family. The voices of two participants also revealed the role religion played in their lives. Three themes surfaced from the data analysis: educación, aspirations, and familism. There was also a subtheme that emerged: fatalism/fatalismo.

Theme 5: Education and Educación at home. The data analysis shows that all participants define and value education on two levels. One is the education their children receive at school. Families support school work as best they can through encouragement, consejos, advice, apoyos, moral supports, and aspirations. At home, education is also defined and valued as educación. Immigrant Guatemalan families, like other Latina/o families, raise their children to be educated, ser educado, whereby parents/guardians teach respect, effort, giving to others, and having responsibility at home. It is important to highlight families’ involvement in the home to show how parents and guardians care about their child’s education. Educators and administrators’ unresponsiveness to Latina/o families’ cultural attitudes and beliefs contributes to a weak home-school partnership. It also contributes the notions associating Latina/o students’ poor academic achievement on the parents (Olivos, 2006).

Subtheme: Education at home. Families are supportive of teachers at home when addressing school work. They effuse an optimism to their children in expressions such as haga el esfuerzo, “make an effort,” tú puedes, “you can do it,” or échale ganas, “give it all you can.” These expressions are embedded in daily conversations parents and guardians have with their adolescent. This positive encouragement turns into a resource of confidence and self-reliance for
the child. Other at home parental backings are *apoyos*, moral support, consejos, and aspirations which often go unrecognized by teachers and educators.

*Aproyos, moral support.* Dolores expressed a desire to support her daughter as best she could, but was not able to elaborate on what the supports were. Yet, her moral support was evident when she stated: *yo quiero ayudarla con apoyos para que ella siga adelante para un mejor futuro. Como padres tenemos que empujar a los niños a un camino mejor. “I want to help her with all the support I can give so she can forge ahead towards a better future. We as parents should push our children to a better path.”*

Luz also provided moral support to her son. *Siempre le pregunto si [los maestros] le dejaron deberes, aunque yo no vaya a la escuela, yo siempre le pregunto cómo puedo ayudarlo. Le preguntó qué hiciste, como le fue a la escuela, que cuando van a dar las calificaciones. Ehh, siempre le exhorto. “I always ask him if they [his teachers] left him homework, even if I don’t go to school, I always ask: how can I help you? I also ask him what he did. How did your day go at school? When will you be getting your grades? I always exhort him.”*

Esperanza did not contemplate providing supports in the home as she full-heartedly trusted school educators to accomplish this task: *Pues yo confio en ustedes. Ustedes son los que les enseñan porque yo no puedo. Yo sé que [mi hija] está en buenas manos. Tengo toda mi confianza en ustedes. “Well, I trust you all. You are all the ones who teach my daughter because I don’t know how to. I know she [my daughter] is in good hands. I have all the trust in you all.”*

David relied on his daughter to be home after school to take care of the younger children. However, before the younger children arrived home, Carmen had quiet time at home, during which time David telephoned advising Carmen to study. *Pues, con los pequeños, Carmen nos ayuda mucho porque ella cuando llega de la escuela pues la llamamos a ella para preguntarle si ...*
ella tiene trabajos de la escuela y que los haga antes de que lleguen los niños, porque ella les ayuda bastante. Siempre estamos llamándole a ella para ver qué clase de trabajos tiene y asegurarnos que ella los haga en una hora temprana para que pueda ayudar a los niños. “Well, Carmen helps us a lot with the little ones. We do call her when she gets home from school and ask her if she has homework. We tell her to get them done before the little ones arrive because she helps them a lot. We are always calling her to see what kind of work she’s been assigned and to reassure ourselves that she does her work early. This way she can help with the children.”

Roberto, too, offered his daughter moral support by removing all domestic obligations after school so that Maria could study. Tiene su propio cuarto. La mama y yo le hemos hablado que no le ponemos tareas ni nada extra para que pueda estudiar, sino que todo su tiempo es para el estudio. Y ella llegando, ella se pone. “She has her own room. And her mother and I tell her that we have not given her any tasks or extra stuff for her to do, and we have told her that all her time is for her to study. And that is where she goes when she comes back.”

**Consejos, advice.** Antonio offered consejos to his nephew, recognizing his limitations. When asked how he supported his nephew with school work at home Antonio’s initial silence broke into a nervous laugh when he said: Eso es una pregunta dura, se lo digo así de directo. Yo como no hablo ni escribo el inglés se me hace muy difícil a mí también decirle [a mi sobrino] esto se hace así [silencio]. La razón [por la cual no llamo la escuela] es porque yo no hablo el inglés. Lo que le digo es siempre pregunte a la maestra porque son las cosas como son porque yo no puedo ayudarte con esas cosas en casa. “That’s a difficult question, I tell you straight out. Since I don’t speak or write English it is more difficult for me to tell him [my nephew] anything. I can’t tell him: this is how it’s done [silence]. The main reason [I don’t call the school] is
because I don’t speak English. What I tell him [my nephew] is that he ask a teacher to help you why things are how they are because I can’t help you with those things at home.”

**Aspirations.** A common thread underlying home conversations surrounding school work is the participants’ dreams for their child to be successful. Participants’ aspirations are evidence against preconceived notions that immigrant families do not value education and do not aspire for them to do well. David, Luz, Esperanza, and Dolores have high hopes for the children to become professionals. Antonio wants his nephew to do better than he in the workplace through study. Roberto dreams for his daughter to succeed and be an active member of her community.

Table 10

*Spanish/English Direct Quotes Reflecting How Participants Value Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Espero que vaya a la universidad. I hope she goes to university.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luz</td>
<td>Me gustaría que escogiera una buena profesión. I would like to see him enter a good profession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio</td>
<td>Lo que más me gustaría es que él se prepara y que él no hago lo mismo que yo hago [silencio] porque yo trabajo demasiado. What I’d most like to see is for him to study and be ready. I don’t want him to do the same as me [silence].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberto</td>
<td>Para mí sería un honor y un orgullo ver que mi hija pueda ser de bien en este país. Una persona de bien para la comunidad y para el país. It would be an honor and great pride from me to see my daughter be somebody in this country. A good person who will give to the community and the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esperanza</td>
<td>Pues, que grande bendición seria que fuera una doctora, para ayudar a más gente, ¿verdad?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolores</td>
<td>Me gustaría verla ser enfermera o asistente médico - algo para ayudar a la gente.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subtheme: Educación at home.** In terms of raising their child to be educated, *ser educado*, the data analysis illuminates how immigrant Guatemalan families interact with and
teach their children in the home. *Respeto*, respect, is highly valued to the Latina/o culture. Children are expected to be obedient, polite, and respectful to elders (Valdés, 1996). David clearly states it is their (Guatemalan families’) responsibility to teach their children to respect every one, older and younger. Antonio elaborates this to include respect for children, peers, grown-ups, and elders. Roberto confirms this as well, yet adds the need to teach his daughter to respect herself. Esperanza best captures how respect for the immigrant Guatemalan families reflects an egalitarian worldview whereby *somos todos iguales*, “we are all equal.”

Antonio adds a further dimension to *respeto* that is closely tied to his lived-experiences in Guatemala. For Antonio, the need to be aware of one’s surroundings is important. Antonio raises his nephew and children to stay out of trouble and to avoid conflicts that can cause harm. Instead, he encourages positive engagement in the community to gain respect from others. *Respeto* and *ser educado* for Antonio means to also engage in a dialogue. To respectfully understand turn-taking skills and add to the conversation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>David</strong></td>
<td>Nuestra responsabilidad es hablar [de] cómo ellos tienen que respetar a la gente, se respeta a todo el mundo, aunque sean niños más pequeños o que sea una persona mayor. Les enseñamos las cosas que sabemos y la responsabilidad que tenemos. También hay el esfuerzo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is our responsibility to speak with them about how to be respectful of others. We tell them to respect everyone, whether they be younger children or elders. We have taught our children the things we know and the responsibilities we have. There is also the effort involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Luz</strong></td>
<td>[Ser educado es] que él aprenda y que sea respetuoso con todos. Siempre estamos allí apoyándoles que ‘tu puedes,’ ‘échale ganas’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[To be educated is] that he learn. We are always telling him “you can do it,” “give it all you can.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To be educated means to be observant. If someone does something bad I think that [silence] he can move from all those bad things. [To be educated is also] to study, to be respectful of others, [to know] how to answer and be polite. [I tell them] how to treat olders, their classmates, children, grown-ups respectfully. All that has always been what educated to me is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roberto</strong></td>
<td>Educarla bien para mi es enseñarle a respetar tanto en las personas como ella...respetar a pequeños y mayores. Y hacerle bien a cualquier persona que pueda ayudar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For me to educate her well is to teach her to respect others as well as herself...to respect children and elderly people. And to help others feel well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Esperanza</strong></td>
<td>Para mi ser educado significa no comportarse malo con la persona, no faltarles respeto [a otros] porque todos valemos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For me to be educated means to behave well with everyone, to show respect [to others] because we are all equal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dolores</strong></td>
<td>[La educación] es que ella valore siempre lo importante que es la familia, la unión, y el respeto a los demás, sean niños o gente grande para que uno le respete.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme 6: Familism/Familismo. Familism or Familismo, focuses on how family members depend on one another and form a network of cohesion. It is an extensive and complicated family network because it includes distant relatives and half-siblings. Strong family ties in Guatemala and throughout the U.S. show a reliance participants have with their relatives and a sacrifice they make to help each other out. It has been these family connections and supports that have helped all but two participants make the journey to the U.S. and to the state of Massachusetts.

Upon arriving to the U.S. at the age of 16, David relied on an aunt he had never met before, an uncle he barely remembered, a half-brother of his sister, and a half-sister to travel from Virginia, two cities in Maryland, and eventually to Massachusetts. Roberto, also at the age of 16, stayed with relatives in New Jersey before living with other relatives in Massachusetts. Antonio, who took legal guardianship of his nephew, emphasised the importance of familism stating: todos [en la familia] le ayudamos. Yo siempre le digo que no se preocupe porque si uno no lo tiene haremos todo los posible para tenerlo. “We’re all [family members] helping him. I always tell him not to worry; that we’ll do everything in our power to help him.”

Another aspect of familism is the self-sacrifice family members make for each other. In Guatemala, family members sacrificed their hard-earned life’s savings to pay for three participants’ journey to the U.S. These participants shared their intentions of returning the money borrowed when they could. Remittences testify to self-sacrifices the participants faced. David, Luz, and Roberto worked to pay for not only their rent and food in the U.S., but also to send money back to their family in Guatemala. Even with their own families in the U.S., remittences were sent back to families in Guatemala reducing privileges they could have offered to members in their household.
Table 12

Spanish/English Direct Quotes Reflecting Familism/Familismo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| David       | *Yo tenía dinero que me habían dejado prestado dos tíos allá [en Guatemala]. En ese tiempo tenía que pagar cinco mil quetzales.*  
I owed money to my uncles over there [in Guatemala] that they had lent me. At that time, I had to pay 5,000.00 quetzales [Guatemalan currency]. |
| Antonio     | *[José] solo pago lo que yo le dejé, de la cosecha. Mis otros hermanos le dieron el dinero que tenían. Cuando empieza a trabajar, devolverá el dinero.*  
[José] only paid with the money I gave him from my harvest. My other brothers gave him what money they had. When he starts to work, he’ll return the money. |
| Dolores     | *El viaje me costó cinco mil quinientos dólares. Ese dinero me lo prestó un familiar. Cuando llegué aquí empecé a trabajar para devolverle el dinero.*  
The trip cost me 5,500 dollars. A family member lent me that money. When I arrived here [the U.S.] I began to work to pay the money back. |

**Subtheme: Fatalism / Fatalismo.** Luz and Esperanza endorsed a reliance on fatalism rather than familism. Perhaps this is because in their cases, they had little support and protection in their inner circle. Their networks were smaller and therefore more limited and their circumstances more unfortunate. For this reason, they found themselves relying on their own wits, ability, and faith. Both women name God and their faith as a major factor in permitting them to undertake such a perilous journey and then face an uncertain future in an unknown country with no guarantees or safety belts. Both women were prepared to face the consequence of whatever fate places before them with equanimity, patience, perseverance, hard work and prayer (faith).
Table 13

Spanish/English Direct Quotes Reflecting Fatalism/Fatalismo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luz</td>
<td>Yo vine con mi hijo y mí sobrina de siete años. Yo no me sentía triste ni nada. Me sentía bien segura de que iba a llegar a este país y hasta aquí Dios dirá lo que tiene pensado para nosotros. I came with my son and my seven-year-old niece. I didn’t feel sad or anything. I felt certain I’d reach this country and until now God will let us know what he has in mind for us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esperanza</td>
<td>[Antes de salir de Guatemala] yo hable con Dios primero. Si el me permitía a venirme y moverme que me diera vida en el camino para poder volver a mis hijas un día. Tengo mucho que agradecerle a Dios porque así fue, pude llegar a este país. [Before departing Guatemala] I first spoke with God. If he allowed me to come and move, that he give me life on the way so that I could return to my daughters one day. I have to thank God for a lot, because that is how I was able to reach this country.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Domain 3: Latino Parent Engagement

Joyce Epstein (1995) and Karen Mapp (2012) recognized many forms of parent engagement. It could be done at home where supports were provided. It could also be seen at school, where parents participated in or attended school events. The findings in this study show that the participants were engaged in their children’s education more at home than at school. For the past four years, the high school has created the context and condition for Latina/o families to participate in their children’s schooling with teachers, educators, and community members at the high school. Guatemalan’s and other Latina/o parents’ presence is dependent on their education experience, transportation, and work schedule. Two themes emerged in this domain: participating in Latina/o parent workshop and en la unión hay fuerza or strength is found in the community. A subtheme emerged: machismo.
**Theme 7: Latina/o parent workshops.** The Latina/o parent leadership workshop is offered once a month Saturday mornings at the high school. Its purpose is to bring Latina/o families together to meet and share experiences, understand the school system, know their rights and responsibilities as parents, learn from each other, and collectively engage in a critical conversation surrounding the education of their child. A Latina/o parent workshop is an interesting platform from which families’ cultural wealth can gain prominence not only to the families’ themselves, but to school and community members as well.

Of the six participants only four participated in the Latina/o parent leadership workshops held at the high school. David understands the importance of the workshops for families to meet and converse amongst themselves and teachers. These workshops have allowed David to feel safe and comfortable at the high school. Luz appreciates spending time and sharing stories with other families, even though she is not present as often as she would like. Esperanza views the workshops as a vehicle to show support. It is not clear, though, if the support is for her or for the Latina/o community. Dolores’ work schedule prevents her from attending the workshops, yet she understands how such workshops can support and unify her people.
Table 14

Spanish/English direct quotes reflecting participants' participation in school events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Sus reuniones de los sábados me informan y me apoyan. Sus reuniones se hacen para que la gente se conozca, platican sus ideas. Ayudan porque conoce uno a los maestros que están con nuestros hijos, y le da como confianza a uno porque uno no sabe a dónde ir para preguntar lo que uno quiere saber de la escuela. [Sus reuniones] nos ha enseñado las partes de trabajo que hacen los chicos y conociendo a los maestros en sus aulas. Pienso que la forma en que [los maestros] reciben a todos los estudiantes, es bonito. Que vengan [las familias], que se sienten seguros. Your Saturday meetings keep me up to date and support me. Your meetings take place so that people can find out and talk out their ideas. They help because you get to know the teachers of your children and that makes us feel more trusting and comfortable. This is because we know where to go to ask what we want to know about the school. [Your meetings] have shown us part of the work our children to and allows us to get to meet the teachers in their classrooms. I like the way they [the teachers] receive their students in their classrooms. That [the families] that feel safe [and confident] can come. [to the school].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luz</td>
<td>He ido a su reunión. Me gusto estar con las otras familias, pero en mi caso no tengo transporte y me cuesta venir. I have been to your meetings. I like being with the other families, but in my case it is hard for me to be [at your meetings] because I don’t have transportation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esperanza</td>
<td>Esta perfecto las reuniones que usted hace para que todos vaya y se apoyan. Your meetings are perfect for everyone to attend to show support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolores</td>
<td>Trabajamos mucho pero tal vez más reuniones por la tarde o el sábado, como la suya, nos unen y ayuden. A lot of us work hard but perhaps if there were more meetings in the evening or on Saturdays, like yours, that would help us.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subtheme: Machismo. Machismo refers to males who are the head of the family and make key decisions on family actions. The term machismo reflects negative Latino male norms such as sexism, aggressive behaviors, superiority, and masculinity that can lead to domestic violence (Cruz et al., 2011; Estrada et al, 2011). The extracts below illustrate three men’s acknowledgement that Guatemalan male participation, or lack thereof, in school events and
functions is culturally bound. The three Guatemalan men are products of their culture, having been raised in traditional gender roles where the Latino family unit makes clear distinctions between male and female responsibilities. The men were brought up to be strong, hardworking, and responsible while the women were raised to nurture, perform domestic work, and care for others.

Antonio validates the dominance of machismo over time. Not only does he feel misplaced in the Latina/o parent workshop, but he also recognizes that his father never attended his school because he lived in a patriarchal society. Roberto identifies the gender roles. He acknowledges that men work seven days a week, one day more than women, and this labor demands respect and power. The work schedule is not so much an obstacle to participating in school functions as it is the role of the male figure that cannot cross over to perform female responsibilities. Consequently, Roberto states it is the women who looks after school affairs.

While David recognizes that Guatemalan men are machista, he breaks the mold. David crosses the gender line by pushing his daughter’s stroller down a busy street and be shunned by other Latino men, who do not approve. David attends the Latina/o parent workshop and recognizes that he is often the only male present. He understands how the other women view him and perhaps relay this to their husbands back home. Nevertheless, David is strong to withstand the pressure of his male companions and follow his conviction to exercise a more active role in his daughter’s life. David, in fact, embodies the positive side to machismo which is caballerismo, derived from the word caballero which means “gentleman” (Estrada et al., 2011). Caballerismo refers to fathers who are involved in their children’s upbringing and education. They exhibit characteristics such as dignity, honor, and respect (Cruz et al, 2011).
Table 15

Spanish/English Direct Quotes Reflecting Machismo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| David       | *Lo que yo pienso es que muchos papás especialmente si son de Guatemala hay mucho machismo y a veces les da vergüenza ser vistos en reuniones y tienen vergüenza de ser vistos con sus hijos. Nosotros somos machistas y vergonzosos... pero, como ves, yo vengo a tus reuniones.*
I think that if the fathers are Guatemalans, there is a lot of machismo there. Sometimes they [the men] feel ashamed to be seen there in meetings and ashamed to be seen with their children. We are machistas and we feel shame [about our kin, about ourselves]…. but as you know, I come to your workshops. |
| Antonio     | *Mi padre jamás iría [a la escuela].. Eso todavía existe allá y aquí. Esa cosa de machismo que dice que cosas de mujeres es de ir a reuniones.*
My father would have never gone [to my school]. That still exists a lot over there and here. That machismo business that says it’s women’s business to go to [school] meetings. |
| Roberto     | *Los hombres trabajan de lunes a sábado. Entre semana aquí hombre y mujer trabajan dos trabajos. Los sábados por lo general, la mujer descansa y el hombre trabaja siempre. Entonces a veces se les hace complicado. Usted sabe, en nuestra cultura existe el machismo que no nos deja sentir cómodos en una reunión de la escuela. Unos piensan que asuntos de la escuela es cosa de mujeres.*
During the week men and women work two jobs. Usually women rest on Saturdays, but men always work. We work from Monday to Saturday. So sometimes things are complicated for us. You know that machismo exists in our culture and [it] doesn’t make us feel comfortable in a school meeting. Some believe that school affairs are things women look after. |

Theme 8: En la unión hay fuerza / Strength is found in the community. When participants were asked what they thought Latino parent engagement at the high school could look like Luz remained silent. She had never contemplated the thought. The other participants felt that parent engagement meant coming together collectively to find a strength in their unity to project to the school community that, as a caring population, they valued education and they were good people. The participants stressed the importance of *en la unión hay fuerza*, strength is found in the community, and that through this unity a single voice could be heard.
Though it sounds easy to congregate to a single place, Roberto understands the difficulty of doing so. Roberto knows that men and women work two-shift jobs, have limited transportation, and lack child care to attend meetings. Nevertheless, he suggests strong channels of communication are needed to reach out to all families. Dolores also points out that if families support one another, the Latinas/os can have a greater voice. Dolores and Roberto understand that immigrant Guatemalans are not accustomed to meeting to discuss the education of their children. Yet, like the other participants, they understand there needs to be a push to bring all Latinas/os together to project a single voice that represents their concerns, culture, presence, and dreams.

Implicit to the participants’ narratives is a sense of wanting to belong. The participants yearn to come together in an unfamiliar platform. They are cognizant of having to fill a void in order to be part of the whole to show educators they are present and, eventually, have an input in the education discourse. Antonio emphasizes the need to be seen and to be taken into account. David also wants to be seen and is committed to participating in the Saturday workshops to show how he and the other women are invested in the education of his child. The participants want to build relationships amongst themselves and later extend this to staff members at their children’s’ school where they can feel welcomed and respected.
Table 16

Spanish/English Direct Quotes Reflecting En La Unión Hay Fuerza/Strength Is Found in the Community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Pues, una parte es para que miren [los educadores] que a uno les interesa la educación de los hijos. Sus reuniones de los sábados me informan y me apoyan. Well, a part of it is so that they [school members] see that [we] are interested in the education of our children. Your Saturday meetings keep me up to date and support me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonio</td>
<td>Yo pienso que deberíamos apoyarnos más para que nos toman en cuenta a nosotros. Que no somos unas malas personas que vamos buscando o andando en malas cosas. Tenemos que dar una buena imagen. I think we should support each other more so that we’re taken into account. We are not bad people, we aren’t here looking to do bad things or doing them. We need to give a better image of ourselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberto</td>
<td>Lo que yo veo es que deberíamos estar más unidos, que haya más comunicación entre todos los latinos. Entre todas las voces podemos llegar a tener una sola. I believe we should be more united, there ought to be more communication amongst all the Latinos. Amidst all the voices we can come to have one single voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esperanza</td>
<td>Yo creo que la participación de nosotros hace mucha falta...es muy importante que no apoyemos...esta perfecto las reuniones que usted hace para que todos vaya. I think our participation is much needed...it is important that we support each other….your meetings are perfect for everyone to attend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolores</td>
<td>Entre más unión haya es mucho mejor. Si nosotros, los padres latinos, nos apoyáramos más tendríamos una unión más grande. The more unity there is, the better it will be. If we, Latino parents, were to support each other more, we would have a stronger unity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overarching theme: Resilience

Common to all the themes identified in this study is a self-sacrifice the participants have made to help their children succeed in American schools and fulfil the American Dream (Hill & Torres, 2010). The narratives describe both risks taken to reach the US as well as protective factors to build a safe home for their families in a host community. Risks include journeys on
foot to the U.S., having few Spanish-speaking adults in the school system, experiencing discrimination and exclusion due to lack of a legal status and knowledge of the English language. In terms of protective factors, the narratives demonstrate the importance of cultural capital: interdependence of family members, conversations embedded with moral supports, advice, and aspirations that envelope the participants from negative and adverse elements outside the home. It is necessary to value participants’ voluntary sacrifices to provide their children an education. This calls for a re-examination of parent engagement. Families’ lived experiences and culture need to be validated by school members. The sacrifices parents make are a cultural wealth educators need to understand and learn from.

**Summary**

This study used qualitative analysis and semi-structured interviews to examine the experience of six immigrant Guatemalan parents and guardians who have a child in a public high school. The data analysis resulted in nine broad themes grouped into three domains that provide answers to this study’s research questions. The participants’ *testimonios* reveal that they have faced racism in their home country, which triggered their coming to the U.S. The participants continue to experience racism in this country. A lack of fluency in the English language, immigration and legal status, and their limited and interrupted education are clear barriers identified by the participants to engage in meaningful interactions with school members. Nevertheless, all the participants valued relationships with their extended family members, had aspirations for their children to be college or career ready, and recognized the strength of their community as exemplified in Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth and funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Moreover, a participant’s difficulty in responding to what Latino parent engagement looks like and families concern about how educators perceive them
reveals the difficulty Latina/o families have in participating in school functions, let alone communicating with educators to support their children's learning and success. Furthermore, the male participants in the study revealed the importance of examining the intersection of cultural norms and paternal engagement. These testimonios pose a new challenge in designing platforms for Latina/o family engagement.

Chapter 5 discusses how these findings answer the research questions posed in this study. It will also look at the results within the theoretical framework and extant literature related to family engagement. In addition, the discussion will offer suggestions for how my high school engages with Latina and Latino parents and guardians. The next chapter will also discuss the limitation and future studies.
Chapter 5: Discussion of Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of six immigrant Guatemalan parents who have a child in a public high school. The challenges immigrant Guatemalan parents faced stemmed from a low education background, immigrating on foot to the U.S., having a limited English proficiency, and feeling a decreased efficacy in being able to address the needs of their adolescents (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). This was further exasperated by cultural issues and a lack of knowledge to navigate the American education system. The research problem addressed in this study was that institutional structures and federal mandates enveloped in a school culture perpetuate hidden conditions that prevent families, particularly Latina/o parents, from engaging with their school.

This study sought to understand the lived-stories of parents as personal, detailed accounts while simultaneously offering a new view point on family engagement. From these rich narratives, nine themes and one sub-theme surfaced and were clustered under three domains: racism, cultural capital, and Latina/o family engagement. These domains align with this study's overarching question: How do immigrant Guatemalan families who have children in a northeastern U.S. high school make sense of their children’s education?

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative research approach used in this study to explore how immigrant Guatemalan families make sense of their real life experiences and understand how these experiences add a richer and deeper layer of understanding in family engagement (Smith et al., 2009; van Manen, 1990; Laverty, 2003). In addition, the frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latina/o Critical Theory (LatCrit) were applied to this research, so as to record and illuminate the experiences and perspectives of immigrant Guatemalan parents and identify institutional factors which impact family
engagement at a high school. CRT and LatCrit aligned well with IPA because they were concerned with understanding immigrant family engagement at a public high school.

Furthermore, this study focused on the fourth tenet of CRT and LatCrit, the centrality of experiential knowledge, that drew on the collective narration of immigrant Guatemalan families who told their stories of conflict, tension, and oppression to unveil inequities in the dominant story (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Elenes & Delgado Bernal, 2010). Also regarded as testimonios or storytelling, the collective narratives in this study gave voice to a population that has historically been excluded from the practices, policies, and decision-making processes in U.S. schools. (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

Current empirical studies on the relationship between family practices and student achievement is not yet robust enough to determine if theories on family-school relationships are transferable to Latino/a families (Hill & Torres, 2010). The extant literature on Latina/o families focuses principally on Mexican or Puerto Rican populations, which inform us of culturally embedded strategies Latina/o parents use to promote academic achievement. Elenes and Delgado Bernal (2010) argue that additional research is needed with Latinas/os of different ethnic backgrounds to identify and analyze their influence on achievement. Little, if any, research focuses on the voice and culture of the immigrant Guatemalan parents or caregivers. It is my aim to specifically examine this population in our educational system and record their experiences, thus filling a much-needed gap in the literature given the growing presence of Guatemalans in the United States.

This chapter addresses the research findings relevant to the themes identified in Chapter 4: poverty and lack of education; (im)migration; status; language; education and educación at home, familism, Latino parent workshops, and en la union hay fuerza (strength is found in the
community). These findings are presented through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latina/o Race Theory (LatCrit) and in relation to the literature. The themes are discussed under the research question: (1) how does racism shape the experiences of Guatemalan families at my high school? (2) how do Guatemalan families use their cultural capital in schools? (3) how does the school empower Guatemalan families? This chapter concludes with recommendations for practice and research. It also presents action steps that may be taken to implementing family engagement at a school district.

**How does racism shape the experiences of immigrant Guatemalan families?**

Central to Critical Race Theory's (CRT) and Latina/o Race Theory (LatCrit) is race. In this study, CRT served to analyze the centrality of race while LatCrit provided an understanding on how race intersects with poverty and education, (im)migration, legal status, and language. Together, CRT and LatCrit are a lens to capture and illuminate the experiences and perspectives of immigrant Guatemalan families and identify institutional factors which impact family engagement at my public school. CRT and LatCrit stress the need to examine how race is deeply embedded in institutional policies and practices that create a school culture that neglects to recognize the diversity and cultural capital students and families of color possess. Both theories suggest that public education institutions favor cultural and social structures that benefit some groups more than others.

This is certainly the case with immigrant Guatemalans whose limited experience of educational engagement over time has resulted in (inter)national migration and varied identities (Jiménez Estrada, 2012). These factors are rooted in a colonial framing of indigenous identity espoused by the government. Jiménez Estrada (2012) argues that the Guatemalan government helped to stratify the society to sustain a “mestizo ideal” through its assimilation and discrete
policies on social relations. The government helped create a mestizo population to identify the indigenous other (Hale, 2004 as cited in Jiménez Estrada, 2012) and determine who should benefit from accessing a state education. Accessing a state education is strongly linked to the country’s racialized hierarchy that favors Guatemala’s elite class, Ladinos.

A long history of oppression, exploitation, and discrimination separates the indigenous from the Ladino populations in Guatemala. Ladinos are those who are mixed blood (European and indigenous) and are lighter-skinned. More importantly, they are westernized and generally economically better off (Jiménez Estrada, 2012). A socioeconomic divide exists because the indigenous population lives in poverty and Ladinos dominate the commercial and political arena (Jiménez Estrada, 2012). The six participants in this study did not consider themselves to belong to any particular ethnicity nor saw themselves as part of the indigenous class, because of the strong stigma attached to belonging to an indigenous world (Jiménez Estrada, 2012). Nonetheless, they have been the recipients of cultural values that have affected their upbringing, socio-economic status, and education in Guatemala. Roberto is the only one who mentioned his Quiche speaking parents, but showed no connection or identification with Quiche culture. An unofficial apartheid has ruled Guatemala for generations, if not centuries, in which the education system is responsible for perpetuating racism and discrimination based on ethnicity, skin color and social class (Jiménez Estrada, 2012).

A tenet of LatCrit is the centrality of experiential knowledge. This tenet acknowledges a need to create an opportunity where immigrant Guatemalan families voice their experience with educational systems in Guatemala and the U.S. The testimonios or counter-stories of participants in this study tell of conflict, tensions, and oppression in relation to race and the education system (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). The intersection of immigrant families and family engagement
centers the voice and experience of Guatemalan families in my effort to capture their relationship with the U.S. school system. There is a need for immigrant families to share their stories collectively and establish a sense of community for other Latina/os and subordinate groups who also navigate an American education system.

**Poverty and education: Coming to the U.S. to improve their lives.** McAdams’ (2012) work on improving education in Guatemala states the struggles Guatemalan families face in educating their children. Families are torn between educating their children, which will benefit the family in the long-run, and their dire economic circumstance that requires the child to work. When choosing between education and survival, families chose the latter. McAdams’ (2012) points out that 30% of the students complete sixth grade. In this study, only one participant completed eighth grade, all the others had an interrupted education up to third grade. The Guatemalan national school curriculum fails to teach children basic skills and knowledge which drives students to drop out, hold an unskilled employment, or turn to crime to support their families (McAdams, 2012). McAdams (2012) concluded that given the underrepresentation of the Guatemalan indigenous in the workforce and a wage discrimination towards them, it was not surprising that these families preferred their children to help them out in the fields than go to school. As recipients of low educational attainment and crime, all the participants in my study left Guatemala to improve their quality of life and to educate their children in the U.S. (Tabor & Milfont, 2011).

**Continued poverty related to challenges in the U.S.** While the participants in this study no longer live in extreme poverty, in the U.S. they continue to work long hours, like their parents, in low-paying jobs due to their lack of skills, poor English, and immigration status. While one hopes these constructs will fade away, the participants’ socio-economic and political
status prevents their children from reaping the benefits of education for upward mobility in the U.S. One deciding factor to immigrating to the U.S. for all the participants was to access the school system to succeed in society both academically and economically (Hill & Torres, 2010). Covarrubias (2011) and Olivos and Mendoza (2010) remind us that the construct of race or ethnicity is a more permanent characteristic of Latinas/os, immigrant Guatemalans in this case, that does not free them from long-established prejudices and negative attitudes which can cause asymmetrical relationships with members of the dominant culture—be it in Guatemala, in the U.S., and even within a Latina/o community. The construct of race reinforces the aforementioned problems of poverty and education.

**Immigration: From Guatemalan to Latino and Hispanic.** Guatemalans are familiar with how patterns of (im)migration impact family and relatives. Yet, upon their arrival to the U.S. their identity melts and blends under into the umbrella term *Latino* or *Hispanic*. Their constellation of histories, politics, migrations, music, literature and language are reduced to a monolithic word (Elenes & Delgado Bernal, 2010). This categorical simplification neutralizes the differences between ethnicities (Jiménez Estrada, 2012) and ignores the different nuances that define the richness of cultures. The uniqueness of Guatemalan families is both their rich and complex heritage that is glossed over and not captured in the census (Covarrubias, 2011).

**Language and legal/immigration status.** Limited English proficiency as well as low education attainment, immigration status and race/ethnicity influence how Latina/o families interact with school members and vice versa (Olivos, 2006). All participants in this study were cognizant that their limited English proficiency prevented them from improving their position in their jobs, as was the case of David and Antonio, and establishing a relationship with educators, as was the case of all. Latina/o families relied on their children to assist as language brokers, to
take care of siblings, and help with domestic chores (Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007; Valdés 1996). Both David and Roberto depended on their daughters for interpretations and to care and watch over younger siblings. Relying on adolescents for information on school matters puts a high level of responsibility on the child while it also marginalizes and disenfranchises the parents (Perreira et. al., 2006). In addition, it puts immigrant families in an uncomfortable situation where it is difficult for them to talk to their children about educational experiences and knowledge they themselves have never had access to (Sy et al., 2013) while simultaneously distancing them from local connections and possibilities.

Garcia-Reid et al. (2013) demonstrated that immigrant Latina/o parents reported difficulties engaging with their schools because they experienced discrimination based on their legal status. Antonio, Roberto, and David mentioned they lived in fear because of their immigration status and not having a good command on the English language. This fear curbs trustworthy relationships with the school members that works against the participants and may contribute to a deficit thinking from teachers, educators, and administrators. Language is just the tip of the iceberg since it hinders the participants from many possibilities. The acquisition and fluency in the English language is a constant and demanding process on families and their children that it takes time for recent arrivals in any foreign setting not only to learn the language, but understand the rules of the game (Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

Summary

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) have been important in this study to validate and center the experiential knowledge of immigrant Guatemalans. The two theories have revealed that race, ethnicity, social class, and immigration status have shaped the life trajectories and experiences of immigrant Guatemalan families. Guatemalans’ migration
within their country and immigration to the U.S. are rooted in a cultural system of racial
classification that is not shared by Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and other Latinos
(Massey, 1993). Prejudice and discrimination have always fragmented the Guatemalans whose
history of survival is characterized by moving to different cities and across borders. Racial
inequities produced and maintained within public institutions have always followed immigrant
families. Due to participants’ weak command of Spanish and English, limited education,
and legal/immigration status, they all live a subordinated experience of fear and invisibility. This
experience is and has been racialized through time and place. Upon immigrating to the U.S.,
immigrant Guatemalans experience their new society, and discern that they, once again, do not
belong to the dominant group. They also do not belong to a group of parents who send their
children to the same public school in the district.

The participants’ migratory and immigration history has prevented them from socializing
and belonging to a community. The participants are uncomfortable interacting among
themselves, even less so with educators. Recent immigrants stand in a difficult cross-current
owing to: their educational limitations and lack of tools to navigate through numerous unknown
systems that define life in the U.S. and their encounter with other Latinas/os and other immigrant
populations in this country. This unique circumstance positions immigrant Guatemalan parents
and guardians as holders of knowledge to create a new reality that is better than the present. The
power of their collective memory serves to empower other Latina/os and communities of color.

How do Guatemalan Families Use Their Cultural Capital in Schools?

In addition to Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latina/o Race Theory (LatCrit) this study
also relied on Yosso’s (2005) Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework that identified six
capitals: familial, aspirational, resistant, linguistic, social, and navigational. CCW challenged
the traditional notion of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1997). Yosso's framework provided an alternative perspective for understanding the cultural capital Latinas/o families possess and bring to the high school. Analysis of the data demonstrates that the participants in this study used forms of community wealth to assist them in navigating through their communities and the school despite barriers. While the data show direct correlations to aspirational and familial capital, they also support other forms of capital such as social, resistance, and navigational. This coincides with Yosso’s explanation that the six capitals were not exclusive from one another, but rather were fluid and interconnected.

**Familial capital.** Though immigrant Guatemalan families may not be as visible at school events, their culture holds certain cultural values and commonalities. Like Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans and other Latinas/os present in the literature, immigrant Guatemalans familial capital is significant (Delgado-Gaitán, 2004; López, 2001; Valencia, 2010; Zarate, 2007). Familial capital corresponds to cultural knowledge nurtured by the family. Halgunseth et. al. (2006) recognized that one such knowledge is *familismo* that defines a family’s identity, loyalty, and reciprocity with one another. The participants in this study all experienced emotional and economic support that strengthened their identity and commitment to each other. Antonio received his nephew into his home and speaks of him as his son. Esperanza recounted life-threatening experiences in Guatemala she wanted to spare her children from and that spurred her dangerous journey to the U.S. while David relied on an extended family network upon entering American soil and settling down in Massachusetts. All participants received financial support to leave Guatemala and felt the debt to pay it all back. This family loyalty is characteristic of *familismo*. 
Education and Educación: More than the core curriculum. Pertinent to familial capital is the concept of educación that includes ser responsable (being responsible), respetar a otros (respect elders), and ser bien educado (being well-behaved and having high morals) (Auerbach, 2007; Hill & Torres, 2010; Olmeda, 2003; Valdés, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999). De Gaetano (2007) noted that many immigrant parents who chose not to attend school events because they had weak English language speaking skills, lacked familiarity with how the school functioned and felt excluded, did indeed care about their children’s success in school and instilled the concept of ser educado. Valdés (1996) reported that Mexican mothers brought their children up to be bien educados, meaning that they were warm, honest, polite, responsible, and respectful. Like other Latina/o parents in the literature (López, 2001; Zarate 2007), the participants in this study felt it was their obligation to develop these facets in their child’s education while they attended school for academic purposes. With regard to respeto, however, a dis-connect exists in the data with regard to how families defined the word. The literature (Auerbach, 2007; Valdés, 1996; Zarate, 2007) shows that respeto is projected towards elders. The findings in this study show participants stressing the need to be observant to stay out of trouble, converse intelligently, respect self, and respect everyone, not just elders as reported in some of the literature (Valdés, 1996).

For example, Antonio felt that educación meant to be observant to stay away from danger or bad behaviors. For Antonio it is important that his nephew be a positive and constructive member of his environment. When Esperanza spoke about the importance of instilling the values of educación in her daughter, she emphasized the need for her daughter to respect herself first before she could respect others. Educarla bien para mí es enseñarle a respetar tanto en las personas como ella. [Es decir] que tiene que empezar por respetarse ella, darse a respetar y
respetar a las demás personas, sean pequeños y mayores. [For me, to educate her properly means to show her how to respect other persons as well as herself. [That is to say] that she has to begin by respecting herself, make herself respected and respect the others, be they young or old].

Similarly, Dolores reported that for her educación for her meant respecting everyone, young and old, and being able to know what to say and hold a sound conversation: Sobre las personas [les digo] como responderles, ser más respetuosos a todos- niños, compañeros, adultos y gente grande. [Silencio]. Le digo siempre que le digan [a los otros] algo que sepan que decir, no solo hablar. Siempre todo eso, para mí, siempre [es] ser educado. [I tell her [my daughter] how to treat elders, their classmates, children, grown-ups, respectfully. [Silence]. I tell her that she should always know what to say [to others], not just talk. All that always since this is what being educated to me is].

**Aspirational capital.** Aspirational capital refers to the goals and wishes parents have for their children to be successful in school even though barriers to reaching these goals exist (Yosso, 2005). Plunkett and Bamaca-Gomez (2003) demonstrated how parents motivated their children with caring supports at home to influence their academic learning. To this end, Luz was very supportive of her son inquiring about classes and probing if he had any homework. Robert, David, and Dolores also spoke to their daughters about school work, motivating them to stay connected with the homework and study after school. Alfaro et. al. (2006) found that parents' perceived support from teachers also contributed to students' academic goal setting. Antonio and Esperanza continue to encourage their child to seek help from teachers, recognizing their own limitations to providing direct academic supports. This study discerned that families' aspirational capital was motivational in its intent to instill academic perseverance in their children. This precarious balance of verbally supporting
and encouraging their children and pushing them forward in their academic pursuits while trusting in their children and the system shows great faith and trust in the others as well as of the system on the part of these parents and guardians.

Auerbach (2007) stated that unlike parents of a higher socio-economic status who resorted to economic, social, and cultural capital, immigrant parents drew on their moral, aspirational, familial capital to support their children at the high school. This study supports Auerbach’s (2007) ethnographic study of different typologies of parent profiles in the education of their child: moral supporter, struggling advocate, and ambivalent companions. In this study, the participants fit the profile of moral supporters who push their children to succeed in school. As in Auerbach’s study, the study’s participants are immigrants who have low education attainment, have little knowledge of the American school system, and have low English proficiency. While the participants in both studies did not graduate from high school, they provided their children with moral and caring support. The participants in this study held pláticas (talks) with their children, offering consejos (advice) to motivate their child to push forward through barriers, connect with teachers, and do well in school.

For example, Antonio encouraged his nephew to always ask his teachers for help because he didn’t know how to do the school work. When his nephew told him he was going to meet with his teacher after school one day, Antonio replied: Eso es muy bueno porque eso te sirve preguntar cómo son las cosas porque yo no te puedo ayudar desde aca [la casa]. “That’s good because it will help you to ask why things are how they are because I can’t help you with those things from here [at home].” Luz also reported how both she and her husband supported their son: Le estamos siempre apoyando. Le decimos ‘tu puedes,’ y ‘échale ganas.’ Queremos que muestre a sus maestros que él puede hacerlo. “We are always here supporting him; telling him:
‘you can do it’ and ‘give it your all.’ We tell him to show his teachers that he can do it.” These consejos encouraged the children to value school, study, and hard work. López (2001) reported that consejos contributed to academic achievement.

Summary

Yosso (2005) focused on the knowledge and experiences of students and families of color to define community cultural wealth. In this study, the six testimonios revealed the importance families place on aspirational, social, and familial capital to instill positive outcomes for their children who go through the educational system. Latina/o families’ involvement in education is seen through their high expectations for their children to be more successful than they are, and this is often achieved through formal education. Teachers frequently do not recognize that low-income parents encourage and hold high expectations for their children to study beyond high school (Mena, 2011; Auerbach, 2007). The participants also equated academic success with being educated at home. This involved contributing positively to the community, holding a sound conversation, and respecting themselves as well as others of all ages.

The data in this study revealed an immigrant Guatemalan family structure composed of social networks and relationships, with a strong emphasis on the value of education, of sacrifice and hard work that defines their funds of knowledge. School staff can learn more about how to support their Latina/o students in class by better understanding how to build a two-way relationship with Latina/o families (Moll et al, 1992). Building a strong home-school partnership requires educators and families to learn about each other’s norms, languages, expectations, and attitudes about education (Delgado-Gaitán, 2001). One such approach is for educators to conduct home visits to promote face-to-face interaction (Delgado-Gaitán, 2004). A second approach is to design better methods of communication and to embed cultural connectedness in school practice.
to cement a partnership. Recognizing the strength of histories, language, and traditions of Latina/o families will help narrow the cultural gap between home and school. Otherwise, Latino/a parents are marginalized and left with a sense of inferiority and helplessness (Delgado-Gaitán, 1991).

**How does the School Empower Guatemalan Families?**

CRT and LatCrit share the tenet of centrality of experiential knowledge that use counterstories or *testimonios* to challenge the dominant stories of those in power (Elenes & Delgado Bernal, 2010; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). Individual *testimonios*, counter-stories, collectively narrate a reality, a new truth, in an established venue. Delgado (1989) pointed out that it is the counter-story told by disenfranchised people that shakes the status quo and engages our consciousness in new realities. When Rigoberta Menchú, a Guatemalan Nobel Peace Prize winner, offered her *testimonio* which described the ravages of Guatemala’s 36-year-long Civil War, Menchú said her personal experience reflected the reality of her people (Menchú, 1984, p.1). The *testimonios* of the participants in this study also reflect the reality of other immigrant Guatemalans whose racialized experiences continue to face numerous barriers and obstacles in an educational setting. Without these *testimonio* in an educational setting, our perception of how things are taught to minority students and done in school are taken for granted and never questioned. The insights these accounts offer are useful guides that can provide us with more effective tools and methods to help Guatemalan students and their families feel and be more invested in the educational process. By sharing similar struggles and difficulties, the participants articulated experiences that have also been lived by others. Acknowledging and understanding these stories helps educators discern how they are empowering or disempowering families of color.
En la union hay fuerza / Strength is found in the community. Jasis and Ordoñez (2004) recognized that testimonios were a source of empowerment that could drive parents to enter schools to advocate for their children. In his testimonio, Roberto recognized the strength of his people if they collectively came and worked together to establish a single voice. Antonio, Esperanza, and Dolores also acknowledged the need to support each other to show school personnel they did indeed care about and were cognizant of their children’s education. Curiously enough, some of the participants acknowledged that while they recognized one another, they did not interact much. As Antonio confirmed no hablamos mucho entre nosotros, “we don’t talk a lot amongst ourselves.” Roberto pointed out the immigrant Guatemalan has not been socialized to interact amongst themselves as a cohort or other Guatemalans, let alone with speakers of a foreign language. This in part may have to do with the political circumstances back in Guatemala and a certain distancing of oneself due to past hurt and pain.

On the whole, however, Guatemalans need to move on and join forces since otherwise they only put themselves at a greater disadvantage and weaken the potential of their collective narrative. It also creates a paradox in which the participants admit their necessity to be united as a people to show school members they care for the education of their child, yet they are unable to pull themselves together to puncture their identity within the school culture. It is a difficult road immigrant Guatemalan families have ahead of them to navigate their new home culture and enter the playing field of family engagement in the public school system.

Freire (2014) recognized that the oppressed suffer from two realities: their own and that of the dominant culture. This translates to immigrant Guatemalan’s dual realities: their racialized experiences (language, education, and immigration status) that shape their interactions with school personnel and the culture of the school. This duality creates a tension in which the
families need to choose between solidarity or isolation, raising their voices or remaining silent, discovering choices or taking a passive stance (p.48). The study’s participants are not yet in the position to establish any family-school partnership. First, they need to gain consciousness of what is happening outside of their immediate experience by thinking critically and gaining a new understanding about their school. When families learn to address their issues amongst themselves and then with school staff, they can be empowered to drive change.

The study’s participants need to first become aware of their dual realities, validate the causes of the tensions found in each reality and transform them to become autonomous, responsible, visible and pro-active. Roberto captured this duality and tension when he acknowledged the need to come together and work together in a space such as the Latina/o parent leadership workshop:

“De ahorita en adelante yo creo que podemos ir trabajando juntos y yo puedo traer cuatro o cinco [personas] más y ellos unos cinco más. Tenemos miedo porque hoy en día no sabemos [silencio]. Nuestromiedo es una barrera. Uno no da su nombre por miedo y no firman. Queremos que nos cuenten, pero no nos dejamos contar. Ese es nuestro error.

From now on, I think we can begin to work together and I can bring four or five [more parents] and they can bring some five more. We are afraid because today we do not know [silence]. Our fear is an obstacle. Because of fear we do not give our names or sign anything. We want to be included, but we do not let ourselves be counted. That is our mistake.

The study’s participants are unable to collectively mobilize themselves to discern and challenge institutional barriers to advocate for their children in educational opportunities (Jasis & Ordoñez,
Their fear of becoming visible and interacting with English-speakers prevents them from initiating an authentic family-school partnership. The participants feel a conflict between their desire for partnership and their fear of visibility due to their legal status. Given these perceptions, caring, respectful, and sensitive leaders willing to build parent-school partnerships need to identify barriers that impede fluid relationships (Delgado-Gaitán, 1994). A welcoming school climate invites families and builds trust, thus setting the conditions for a nurturing relationship. Elements that can bridge the relationship between home and school are: building trust, developing shared understanding of family engagement with families, and discovering the strengths and weaknesses in the home and at the school (Peña, 2000).

**Latino family involvement.** Latino/a parents might not be seen as engaged in their children’s school as most other parents (Zarate, 2007). Many immigrant parents choose not to attend school events because they have weak English language speaking skills, lack familiarity with how the school functions and may feel left out (De Gaetano, 2007). The findings revealed that an internal mechanism in the school required to initiate family participation obstructed authentic engagement. For instance, the six participants commented on the scarce number of bilingual staff members. Antonio, Dolores, and Esperanza relied on the high school’s two bilingual educators to learn about their youth’s work and behavior. Roberto and David relied on their daughters to tell them how they were progressing in their classes. Luz learned about her son’s academic performance when called in to attend a meeting. Yet, she would have liked to know more about events that occur at the high school and wished a Spanish speaker would communicate these events to her. A lack of bilingual speakers broadens the gap between educators and immigrant families. This prevents the participants from being more visible in the school, interacting with more educators, and taking ownership of the educational process. Failure
to acknowledge how immigrant Guatemalan families value education creates impediments to welcoming and actively engaging them in the education of their children.

A cultural difference also obstructed authentic Latina/o family involvement. Latino/a parents respect educators. Having received a limited education themselves, the participants—like many other Latinas/os—believe it is disrespectful to question a teacher’s authority (Trumbull et al., 2003). As a result, Latino/a parents do not want to show disrespect to a teacher so they tend to challenge them less (Olmeda, 2003). Antonio, Esperanza, Luz and Dolores had great trust in teachers. Esperanza captured this reliance on teachers when she commented:

_Ustedes son los que les están ayudando. Ustedes son los que les enseñan porque yo no puedo. Yo sé que [mi hija] esta en buenas manos. “You are the ones who are helping them. You are the ones who are teaching them because I cannot. I know that she [my daughter] is in good hands.”_

Bolivar & Chrispeels (2010) reported that low-income families, such as the study’s participants, coming from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds had difficulty understanding their child’s school culture, structures, and functions. Perriera et al. (2006) recounted that when immigrant parents arrived to the U.S., they held high expectations for their children to achieve more than they did themselves in school. However, upon interacting with their school personnel, immigrant parents encountered racism in terms of accessing resources and encountering attitudes that resulted in controlling their fears. Similarly, Weiss et al. (2009) noted that economically disadvantaged Latina/o parents had less access to information about teachers, how schools were structured, and how they were governed by policies.

Furthermore, Jasis & Ordoñez-Jasis (2012) recognized that a lack of bilingual speakers and interpreters were structural barriers that prevented Latina/o families from holding meaningful interactions with administrators and staff. These barriers silenced families from
entering a dialogue and contributing to the education of their child (Freire, 2014). The study’s participants experienced the barriers cited in the literature. At the high school, limited interpretation services as well as limited multilingual staff members nurtures a narrow exposure to school events and activities, school policies, and classroom performance that excludes the participants from fully understanding first-hand how their child is developing intellectually and socializing in the school system. Moreover, it excluded the participants from purposefully choosing an educational pathway that best suits and benefits the adolescent they know best. This investigation corroborates the existing literature.

The study’s participants’ access to information about the high school was narrow in scope and depth. Antonio depended on his nephew for information on the school and Roberto relied on his daughter. Luz looked to her husband to go to the school and become informed. Esperanza held a high trust on the educators, hence never inquired. Dolores depended on the guidance counselor and me, the researcher, to access information on her and for her child. While the guidance counselor and I are Spanish speakers, the absence of more role models or mentors leaves Latina/o families dependent on teachers or guidance counselors who lack the resources, cultural, and language skills to guide Latina/o students and their families (Gándara, 1995). To date, my high school, like most across the country, has been unsuccessful in engaging Latina/o families due to a series of barriers.

**Barriers.** One strong barrier is a deficit thinking that holds some families and their children are missing the necessary knowledge, social skills, abilities and cultural capital to succeed in schools (Valenzuela, 1999 as cited in Yosso, 2005). Bourdieu (1977) asserted that school success and social mobility of students depended on certain middle and upper class values and cultural capital. The participants in this study possess social values and a cultural capital that
do not align with that of the school. They reflect factors that contribute to low Latina/o family engagement: low educational attainment, poverty, and limited English proficiency (Luna, 2010; Scribner, Young, and Pedroza, 1999). This translates into immigrant Guatemalan families having fewer opportunities to access opportunities schools value and provide to middle class families. This helps to create a lack of trust which impacts how different stakeholders perceive their roles in education (Jeynes, 2003), interact with immigrant families (Fine, 1993), and even create an image of some families as uninvolved and uninterested in the education of their child (Jasis & Ordañez, 2004). Mapp (2003) posited that teachers may perceive Latina/o parents’ absence in school events as signs of neglect or indifference, overlooking the invisible ways in which they do support their children (Valdés, 1996).

Another barrier is intimidation. The participants described a high degree of intimidation existing in immigrant Guatemalans who have historically been subordinated by an elite, dominant group. Educators not familiar with this population’s history may hold the assumptions that Latina/o families are expected to possess the ability or knowledge to access school staff or web sites for information on school assignments, school activities, or information on college and career readiness. Pérez Carreón et al. (2005) posited that immigrant families engaged in traditional parent involvement activities were insufficiently prepared to negotiate their role in the education of their child. This overlaps with Olivo’s (2006) claim that school personnel expected minority families to not challenge their practice, but rather support it. Families’ lack of speaking English prevented them from accessing the school to question how, if at all, the curricula was engaging their child (Cammarota, 1996; Valencia, 2011) or how teachers viewed, supported, and challenged their child (Rios, 2011). A relationship devoid of any sincere communication
contributes to asymmetrical relationships that privilege the dominant culture and subordinates the other.

The data analysis also found another barrier in asymmetrical relationships. Kohl, Lengua & McMahon (2000) questioned who initiated the communication, the school or the parent, and if this was indicative of power relations. Delgado-Gaitán (2014) also questioned the role of power in family-school-community partnerships and argued that the knowledge parents need to negotiate with the school in order to advocate for their child is culturally bound. The participants in this study confirmed the power-relations between home and school. They all stated that they only came to the high school for specific purposes when invited: to attend a meeting, attend the yearly Parent Visitation Night, or assist in the Latina/o Parent Leadership Workshop. The participants in this study validate a performance school ritual that is socializing them to the cultural expectations of the school (Doucette, 2011).

Overall, the participants in this study were unconscious of such barriers primarily because they interacted with such few educators and also because they all respected the teachers and valued the education their child was receiving. They viewed education as a vehicle for social mobility for their child (Hill & Tyson, 2009). While their cultural capital does not align with that of the school system which keeps them from entering a playing field and playing to the “rules of the game” as Lareau and Horvat (1999) discussed, the participants do provide apoyos (supports) and consejos (advice) at home that goes unnoticed by school staff.

Immigrant families’ cultural backgrounds pose a great challenge to staff at my public high school. In Pedagogy of the Oppressed (2014), Paulo Freire provided a lens for understanding the cultural practices of Latina/o families as they encountered barriers in the educational systems of their children. Freire started from the premise that educational institutions
are political and, consequently, not neutral spaces (Solórzano, 1989). He asserted that institutions reproduced the existing culture by socializing students into acknowledging the values and ideology of the dominant group. By extension, immigrant Latina/o families were expected to perform traditional parent involvement rituals that best reflected the state and local policies.

**Summary**

In response to the research question, my high school is not empowering Latina/o families, who are not organized to form an active partnership with school members that would include improved dialogue, nurturing of cultural pride, and enhancing academic performance for their children (Ordóñez-Jasis & Jasis, 2004). The participants in this study are not socialized enough to mobilize themselves to interact with school staff. More importantly, when empowering families there is an intention to dismantle power structures and to transform parents from being powerless individuals to collectively gaining the strength to become proactive in the educational system (Cruikshank, 1999 as cited in Ordóñez-Jasis & Jasis, 2004).

The fact that immigrant Guatemalan parents have not been proactive, nor have they collectively engaged in the education of their children should not encourage school districts to continue to make little effort to engage the most vulnerable families (Olivos, 2004). Henderson and Mapp (2002) argued for educators and policy makers to be critical of their definition of family engagement, so that their sphere of influence converged with that of the parents. Similarly, Cooper et al. (2010) proposed that educational leaders had to have a critical epistemological perspective that governed their actions when relating with diverse families. Rather than adhering to the traditional notions of parental involvement, educational leaders and educators needed to reflect on and value the strengths and limitations families of color possess.
Reflections on Findings Beyond the Scope of the Research Questions

Two findings beyond the scope of the research questions resulted from this study. First, a finding in the field work and data analysis was the role the mother and father exercised. In our conversations, Antonio, David, and Roberto brought forth the term *machismo* to explain how they experienced it and how it defined the male immigrant Guatemalan’s role in family engagement. When asked whether he had suffered from discrimination in Guatemala, one of the participants, Antonio, responded: *Mas que todo lo que sufrimos en espacios públicos hay personas que son más machistas que otras.* “What we most suffered in public spaces is were some persons are more *machista* than others”. This negative experience in Guatemala may still linger and keep Antonio from entering the school for fear of denigration. Roberto also stated how *machismo* prevented men from attending school functions: *Sabe que en nuestra cultura existe el machismo que no nos deja sentir cómodo en una reunión de la escuela. Unos piensan que asuntos de la escuela es cosa de mujeres.* “You know that machismo exists in our culture and [it] doesn’t make us feel comfortable in a school meeting. Some think that school affairs are things women look after”.

David is the only male participant in my monthly workshop and his narrative captures the essence of *machismo*:

*Usted ya lo ve que son casi todas mujeres que vienen a sus reuniones. En primer lugar, bueno, lo que yo pienso es que muchos papás especialmente si son de Guatemala hay mucho machismo y a veces les da vergüenza ser vistos en reuniones y tienen vergüenza ser vistos con sus hijos. A mí no me da vergüenza. Incluso cuando mi hija era pequeña había veces que yo descansaba y la ponía en su carrito y no íbamos todo en la Moody Street y a veces se [los hombres] se paraban para platicar y me decían "¿No te da*
As you can see, it is almost just women who come to your meetings. First of all, I think that if the fathers are Guatemalans, there is a lot of machismo there. Sometimes they [the men] feel ashamed to be seen there in meetings and ashamed to be seen with their children. I’m not ashamed. When my daughter was small, there were even times when I was resting and I would put her in her the stroller and take her down to Moody Street. We’d cover the whole length of it and sometimes the men would stop and talk about it amongst themselves. Then they would tell me: ‘Aren’t you ashamed to be pushing the stroller? That’s women’s stuff.’ I wasn’t ashamed.

If machismo is outwardly prevalent in Guatelaman culture as the male participants stated, then marianismo may define the norms of the women. Marianismo defines the role of the Latina as one who sacrifices for the family, remains in a subordinate position, and refrains from entering conflict to maintain harmonious relationships (Piña-Watson et al., 2013). David’s daughter sacrificed her time after school to be home and take care of their younger siblings while her parents worked. David said: Carmen nos ayuda mucho con los pequeños porque ella cuando llega de la escuela pues la llamamos a ella para preguntarle si ella tiene trabajos de la escuela y que los haga antes de que lleguen los niños, porque ella les ayuda bastante. “Carmen helps us a lot with the little ones. We do call her when she gets home from school and ask her if she has homework. We tell her to get it done before the little ones arrive because she helps them a lot.”

While not the purpose of this study, there are indications that strongly marked gender role expectations for men and women can be found in immigrant Guatemalan families. Future studies
can focus on these traditional gender roles models to learn more about family engagement, student academic achievement, and even stress-related health issues (Piña-Watson et al., 2013).

A second finding that went beyond the scope of this study was the notion of fatalismo, or fatalism, as expressed Esperanza and Luz. Fatalism is defined as cultural and/or religious beliefs of people who are passive, resigned, and uncritical (Diaz et al., 2015). Luz accepts God as the external force that shapes her destiny: Dios dirá lo que tiene pensado para nosotros. “God will let us know what he has in mind for us.” Esperanza also mentioned God on numerous occasions during the interview. These references were emotional and reflected a degree of hopelessness. For instance, Esperanza commented: Gracias a Dios he llegado a este lugar y no me lo esperaba. Le doy gracias a Dios por una oportunidad que mi hija está en la escuela, ¿verdad? “I am grateful to God to have arrived here, I didn’t expect this. I give thanks to God for my daughter to have the opportunity to go to school, isn’t this so?”

These two findings impact how I engage with families at the high school. The clear gender roles of males and females demand a new approach for building trust and opening two-way communication. The fatalistic views of the participants reflect loneliness, hopelessness, and inability to take charge of one’s own life (Diaz et al., 2015). There is no need to build a sense of community characterized by affective bonds, solidarity, communication, and interpersonal trust. The participants, like all families, need to feel they are in control of actions in their environment to mark a difference not only for themselves, but for their children as well. While I am informing families about how to navigate the high school to nurture advocacy skills in families, I am not close to empowering them to take control of the educational process of their children.

**Implications for Educational Practice**

Integrating family engagement efforts across all educational disciplines and linking them
to student learning results in positive outcomes. The findings confirmed families valued the American school system and held high expectations for their child to be successful. Yet, families faced barriers and resorted to strategies to support their child’s success at school. Educators and staff need to recognize these factors to become more culturally proficient.

The data showed families’ racialized experiences left them feeling alienated from their children’s school. Educational leaders should make sense of how race plays a crucial role in education (Evans, 2007). A willingness to understand how race questions the status quo could guide leaders to confront strong barrier markers, such as deficit thinking, and to create an inclusive school environment. Schools need to create a more inclusive environment hiring staff members of different racial groups. Maintaining a mono-cultural and white staff fosters misconceptions and missed opportunities to experience rich, racial, ethnic, and linguistic communities. It is not only important for students of color, but also families of color to have role models in school systems who look like them and share common experiences (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Educators’ difficulties in recognizing families’ linguistic, cultural, and social backgrounds raise an interest in building cultural proficiency in pre-service education programs and professional development (Delgado-Gaitán, 1985; Epstein & Sanders, 2006; Evans, 2013). It is paramount for programs to stress the importance of collaborating with families of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to develop skills and strategies for better communication. Educators might be trained in areas such as: self-awareness, effective dialogue, breaking away from deficit-based models, reaching out to the community for support and services, as well as being creative (Evans, 2013). Learning about the difficulties Latina/o family have engaging with
schools can inform staff of the need to establish meaningful and effective conversations with parents (Weiss et al., 2014).

The data also indicated that immigrant Guatemalan families espoused a home-based pedagogy where children performed domestic work and took on responsibilities in the community. In these after-school contexts, the children exhibited degrees of learning unrecognized in the school setting. It is not enough, though, to have insight into these cultural assets and bring them into an educational practice. Educators need to enter uncomfortable spaces and lead critical conversations for social justice grounded on the lives of students and families beyond the school grounds. This can be achieved by adopting a critical pedagogy to explore power relations, knowledge production, and school-home-community curricula (Freire, 2014; Giroux, 2004; Macedo & Bartolomé, 2001).

With regard to empowering families, educational leaders should start the process in which families change their perception of their own powerlessness to become agents of change. This can be met by facilitating inclusive practices and strengthening connections between the school and community. One such practice is to create spaces where families can connect to share experiences, concerns, and problems. This can be in the form of workshops, coffee hours, and parent education programs. Educational leaders can also contribute to families’ empowerment by inviting them to school governing committees where they are equal partners in decision-making policies. Here Latina/o families’ voice can be heard and their leadership skills can be demonstrated to increase educational opportunities for all students.

**Implications for Future Research**

The results of this study should contribute to the literature on Latina/o family engagement. There is little research surrounding the Guatemalan perspective in the education of
Latinas/os and even less in family engagement. Hill and Torres (2010) noted that more than half of existing literature on parental involvement in education centers on families of Mexican descent, followed by research on families of Puerto Rican or Dominican Republic descent. Hardly any studies have focused on immigrant Guatemalan, Guatemalan, and bi-cultural Guatemalan parents, caregivers, and children along the educational pipeline. Future work should consider concentrating in this population.

Additional investigation is needed to include different individuals who can contribute to a home-school relationship. Students, teachers, guidance counselors and administrators are important stakeholders in the home-school partnership. In terms of students, an exploration of how same gender relationships between mothers and daughters; and fathers and sons could provide useful insights that might have valuable implications in teachers’ instruction. Also, understanding students’ perspectives on family engagement could provide additional insights into enhanced relationships. Furthermore, educators’ definition of family engagement needs to be examined to hone in on attitudes and behaviors that impact student learning. Such studies could identify strategies for stronger understandings and collaborations between the home and school.

**Action Steps**

As my journey as scholar-practitioner comes to fruition, I have learned to make sense of how my professional setting works and does not work around the topic of family engagement. As a scholar in practice, I have viewed my workplace as a setting for research where family engagement needs fixing. Scholarly work has informed my practice to problem-solve and gain the essential skills to become an agent of social change. This shift has led me to continuously examine the connections of fairness in education and society (Takacs, 2002). As a result, I am
driven to present my superintendent and principal a family engagement framework to implement in my school district.

The proposed family engagement framework is based on both the Massachusetts (MA) educator evaluation framework required for every educator and the recently published Massachusetts’s Family, School, and Community Partnership Fundamentals (2015) document to establish a meaningful, culturally sensitive, and purposeful interaction in home-school settings to support student learning and success. The MA educator evaluation framework’s third standard is pertinent to my proposal. The strand is Family and Community Engagement and it has three indicators: welcome, collaboration, and communication. Massachusetts’s Family, School, and Community Partnership Fundamentals document (2015) is modeled after Joyce Epstein’s National PTA six standards of family-school partnership (see Chapter 1) to support student learning and success. The six standards are (1) welcoming all stakeholders, (2) communicating effectively, (3) supporting success of children and youth, (4) advocating for each child and youth, (5) sharing power and responsibility, and (6) partnering with the community. The Fundamentals document’s last three indicators, not found in the educator evaluation framework (see Table 18), leads to transformational processes of advocacy and efficacy which immigrant Guatemalan families, including other parents of diverse backgrounds, need.
### Table 17

**Comparison of Two Family-School Frameworks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Massachusetts (MA) educator evaluation framework</strong></th>
<th><strong>Massachusetts’s Family, School, and Community Partnership Fundamentals</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engagement: Welcomes and encourages every family to become active participants in the classroom and school community</td>
<td>Welcoming all stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration: Collaborates with families to create and implement strategies for supporting student learning and development both at home and at school</td>
<td>Supporting success of children and youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication: Engages in regular, two-way, and culturally proficient communication with families about student learning and performance.</td>
<td>Communicating effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advocating for each child and youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing power and responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partnering with the community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Fundamentals (2015) document adheres to the Title I, No Child Left Behind Act’s (2001) definition of family engagement (see Chapter 1). It also enhances the US Department of Education Dual Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships (2014) to improve school performance and educational reform (Mapp & Kuttner, 2014). These federal and state regulations coupled with an understanding of the culture of cultural engagement are critical components of my framework. As a tool, my proposed framework describes implementation strategies for building culturally-based district and leadership capacity based on the federal and state frameworks.

An initial step would be to implement the framework across the district, which currently is inexistent, and to build leadership across the schools. A district-wide policy should recognize...
family engagement programs linked to academic accountability at each school. A district leadership team that withstands district leadership changes should oversee the development of parent involvement programs based on planning models that analyze surveys, set goals and expectations for school climate and student achievement, identify resources, prepare staff, inform stakeholders, train parents, collect and analyze data, monitor progress, and partner with community businesses. Each school plan will reflect the school’s specific goals within the district’s overarching purpose to provide exemplary education for all students to be ready for college, career, and life.

The family engagement framework presented below is a tool for schools, families, and community members to plan, execute, and evaluate family engagement practices linked to student success. It consists of the six strands that are translated into rubrics for easier implementation, improvement, and assessment. The rubrics describe actions required for activities found in columns that measure the implementation in terms of basic, collaborative, and empowering. The descriptive indicators in basic implementation reflect minimal, basic activities. The descriptive indicators in the collaborative and empowering implementation columns are based on empirical studies and creative approaches to stakeholders’ joint-ownership of the educational process.

**Welcoming all stakeholders.** A first step in engaging families is welcoming them. When families feel valued and supported, they are more likely to engage with teachers, educators and administrators at their child’s school.
Table 18

Rubrics for Welcoming All Stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State regulations</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>Empowering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts model system for educator evaluation (MAMSEE), Standard III (III), Element A (A)</td>
<td>Provide all new families with a “welcome pack” in their home language that includes important school contact information, the school calendar, and a list of community resources (library, health agencies, law offices, advocacy groups, children/youth organizations).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family, School, and Community Partnerships Fundamental (FSCPF)(1)</td>
<td>Provide signage in multiple language to welcome families</td>
<td>Secretaries, student telephone operators after school hours, and entrance employees receive language classes to greet and attend families in their home language, professional development in family engagement and quality client service.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Have interpreters, certified or trained bilingual parents, to assist families throughout the school day, support office staff</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Train parents to provide monthly family orientations to newly arrived families and students so they meet one another and feel welcomed.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Have trained staff and/or bilingual and bicultural staff to partner families with community health, legal, housing, child/youth care providers -dismantle school and community barriers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Communication. Honest and authentic two-way communication is essential for building a trusting partnership. All forms of communication should be in the home language of families who populate the school. Translations and interpretations should be done by a professional translator/interpreter designated by the district. Multiple communication strategies should be employed to reach families: web sites, telephone, texting, legible handwritten notes, print, meetings, classroom blogs, e-mails, flyers, posters, radio, and television. Initial action steps include:
Table 19

**Rubrics for Communication**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State regulations</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>Empowering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAMSEE, (III)(C)</td>
<td>Hold annual parent-teacher conferences</td>
<td>Conduct surveys to guide the development of family engagement</td>
<td>Build a list of specialized, technical, and/or academic language in multiple languages to share with parents, teachers, educators, and administrators communicating in a foreign language to ensure educational clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSCPF(2)</td>
<td>Comply with educational activities as stipulated in Title I and Disabilities Education Act</td>
<td>Inform teachers, educators, and administrators of vulnerable students and families home situations before reaching out to them, and support them in the process</td>
<td>Build a pool of parent volunteers who are trained to serve as mentors to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conduct surveys to measure school climate</td>
<td>Work closely with students and families who are chronically absent</td>
<td>- help families become more engaged in the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Establish a communication system that fits the needs of students and families, especially those who are homeless and mobile</td>
<td>- support families in at-home academic supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Foment communication amongst school members to build a network of support for vulnerable students</td>
<td>- support families make favorable connections at the public library, recreational centers, and other community locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Educational leaders maintain an open-door policy to meet with all students and families in and outside of the school</td>
<td>Train families in the technologies to access educational, recreational and health information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Collaboration.** Partnerships are enhanced when stakeholders work together to resolve issues at home, at school, and in the community. Regular and meaningful interactions are essential for positive and effective support.
Table 20

Rubrics for Collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State regulations (FSCPF)(3)</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>Empowering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student work and achievement is visible in classroom, around the school, in school publications and social media</td>
<td>Teachers, educators, administrators, and staff are given a list of resources and activities in the community</td>
<td>Train teachers, educators, and administrators to do parent-teacher home visits to - establish a dialogue of trust - understand the funds of knowledge present in a household - share curriculum and tools to help students with homework - make families accountable by negotiating a S.M.A.R.T. (small, measurable, accountable, reachable task) goal linked to their child’s classroom performance</td>
<td>Invite families to workshops to learn how to - navigate the school’s academic and vocational system - understand, analyze, and interpret test data to develop strategies for school improvement both at home and at school - co-construct curriculum and raise expectations and achievement for all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student performance on standardized tests is analyzed to improve achievement gap</td>
<td>Families need to research and understand how culturally diverse families value the U.S. system of education for social mobility as they also inculcate in their children a further layer of education that is culturally bound. Schools need to research and understand how families’ different value systems are afforded to education (that includes, among other traits, respect, civism, and discourse)</td>
<td>Familiarize families with at-home/out-of-school academic supports (quiet time, a table for study, television off, team-based learning, community learning opportunities at recreational facilities, digital classroom support: teachers’ website, library website, recommended educational websites) to complete homework, team projects, assignments, reports and/or presentations.</td>
<td>Bridge families with community organizations for supporting learning and/or forging new partnerships out-of-school hours to learn about immigration rights, English language classes in the community, health services, legal, financial, and technological assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families need to research and understand how families’ different value systems are afforded to education (that includes, among other traits, respect, civism, and discourse)</td>
<td>Family workshops/meetings should - convene at hours that are convenient for families, not personnel - accommodate for cultural gender roles by holding workshops for fathers/brothers - inform families of school policies and practices - provide tools and resources for families to support learning at home and at school - ices</td>
<td>Family resource center and/or family liaison and community agencies jointly provide training, presentations, support, and service to families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Advocating for each child and youth.** Empowerment of families begins when families advocate equitable treatment of their child or youth who deserve quality access to rigorous learning opportunities in academic and vocational programs. Schools and the community who value children and youth for their uniqueness and talents set high standards for students’ learning opportunities. Initial action steps include:

**Table 21**

**Rubrics for Advocating for Each Child and Youth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State regulations</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>Empowering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FSCPF(4)</td>
<td>Families are informed in their home languages about their children’s educational rights and the school’s mission, vision and goals</td>
<td>School, families, and community members enhance the family resource center to disseminate information on academic/vocational support and college and career readiness programs</td>
<td>Inform and train parents to mentor other parents to learn how schools operate and exercise their rights under state and federal education laws Provide college and career informational programs and opportunities in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Families are informed in their home languages about where to go and who to contact to ask questions or address concerns</td>
<td></td>
<td>Provide a comprehensive plan designed by family focus groups and school staff to support child’s next grade level or transition from schools and higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School inform families of educational and vocational programs and services</td>
<td></td>
<td>Full home-school-community partnership to establish policies and procedures to promote parents as active members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sharing power and responsibility.** Families, like school and community members, co-construct policies, practices, and programs. Advisory boards and committees should ensure that
parent representation reflects the composition of the schools’ study body. Initial action steps include:

Table 22

Rubrics for Sharing Power and Responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State regulations</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>Empowering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FSCPF(5)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trained parent focus groups help to identify and reach out to under-represented and disconnected families to become active participants in the improvement of school performance and school climate.</td>
<td>Conduct surveys and assessments with families, students, staff, community members to improve policy, curricula, budget, and resources</td>
<td>Train families with the assistance of parents to reach out to and work with new parents as equal partners in the educational sphere to be versed in: - content standards - academic achievement standards and monitoring progress - parent engagement procedures - working with teachers and guidance counselors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principals invite parents, representative of their schools, to be members of advisory council</td>
<td>Parents are invited to voice concerns to public official to improve school performance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local public officials and families meet at a common platform</td>
<td>Opportunities are provided for parents, educational leaders, and community members to hold two-way discussions on improving school climate</td>
<td>Train families to serve on advisory councils</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reciprocal relationship is nurtured between public officials, educational leaders, and parents to engage in strategic planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Partnering with the community.** Bronfennbrenner’s Ecological Model (1979) best describes how partnering with the community is essential as it explains how human learning is influenced and developed through people’s meaningful engagement with others and objects found in their environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As students and families move from one sphere to another (school, family, community), they engage with others, each time interacting differently and each time gaining new insights about themselves. When the spheres overlap, the child’s learning and growth is heightened. Initial action steps include:
Table 23

**Rubrics for Partnering With the Community**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State regulations</th>
<th>Basic</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>Empowering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| FSCPF(6)          | Provide families with one-way communication channels regarding community agencies and resources | Enhance the family resource center in the district  
- to share critical parent information  
- have resources readily available  
- provide services and referrals  
- solicit input from advisory groups, school committee, community members | Partner with community-based organizations to coordinate family engagement activities and/or programs |

**Conclusion**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latina/o Race Theory (LatCrit) are the lenses used to illuminate how race, culture, language, immigration status, ethnicity and education level are central to the analysis of long-standing structures of power and subordination of immigrant Guatemalan families and their interactions with the high school their children attend. The findings in this study correlate with much of the literature that identifies barriers other Latina/o families experience in schools: monolingual/monocultural staff, deficit mindsets and attitudes, and lack of English language skill. Families’ understanding of the school and how their children are progressing resides on what their children tell them and few, if any, bilingual educators. A finding beyond the scope of this study was the male participants’ recognition that immigrant Guatemalan men are *machista* which prevents them for fully engaging in school activities and events. Moreover, some parents’ *fatalism* distances them further from interacting with school members and indicates that new approaches are needed to engage with immigrant families.
Greater and more systematic outreach to families is necessary to build trust, open two-way conversations, inform families of the school process so their children are better prepared for their future pathways. Random acts of family engagement will do little to gain the support of families and empowering them to take charge of their children’s schooling. A program linked to student achievement can increase by validating the ways in which immigrant families raise their children in the home. In this respect, the findings in this study partially support the definition of educación found in the literature. Immigrant Guatemalan children are brought up to not only respect elders, but also respect themselves, younger people, and their peers. Furthermore, for immigrant Guatemalans, educación signifies to be a positive member of society, to avoid trouble, and know how to hold a conversation with others. A family engagement program can positively support families to build on their cultural and social capital to increase their participation in the school.
References


Auerbach, S. (2002). 'Why do they give the good classes to some and not to others?' Latino parent narratives of struggle in a college access program. *Teachers College Record, 104*(7), 1369-1392.


Appendix A

Letter of Permission

Principal
******* High School
(Street)
(City, State, Zip Code)

(Month) (day), 2015

Dear Mr. ****,

As a doctoral candidate in the College of Professional Studies at Northeastern University, I am conducting a study on family engagement. More specifically, I am studying Latina/o parent engagement. The purpose of the study is to examine the experiences of Latina/o parents who have a child in a public high school. The study seeks to understand the lived-stories of parents while simultaneously offer a new view point on family engagement.

The intention of the study is to recruit six parents who have children enrolled at the high school. I am asking for your permission to announce my study at the Latina/o Parent Leadership Workshop and invite parents to participate in my research. There will be three interviews conducted on three different days and they will take place at a public location in the community that is convenient for the parent.

The results of this study will help us learn about Latina/o parents experience with school involvement. I will share the results with you when I complete my study.

Thank you for your support.

Best wishes,

Mary Jo Rendón
Doctoral Candidate, College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
I want to take this opportunity to tell you that I am a doctoral candidate in the College of Professional Studies at Northeastern University in Boston. I am currently in the process of conducting my dissertation research. I am studying Latina/o parents’ lived experiences with educators in their child’s high school.

In order for me to gain more data on this topic, I am inviting you to participate in my research which will consist of three, 45-minute interviews. I will ask questions about your background and your experiences with the school personnel. The first interview is to hear about your childhood in your country. The second interview is to learn more about you, your family, and why you came to the U.S. The third interview is to understand your experiences with the public high school. Finally, I will ask you to verify and confirm information that I captured on the recording. You will have the opportunity to elaborate on the information provided and ask follow up questions at any time. Your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and there will be no repercussions if you decide to not participate. The interviews are confidential.

I am looking for parents who meet the following criteria: (1) is immigrant, (2) is Guatemalan, and (3) has a child at the high school.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact me by telephoning me directly to my cell phone: (617)949-6048 or emailing me at only my student email address: rendon.m@husky.neu.edu. You do NOT have to volunteer for this study. If you do not wish to participate, no harm will come to you or your child.

Thank you.
Comunicación dirigida a familias en el Taller de Liderazgo para Padres Latinos

Quiero aprovechar esta oportunidad para comunicarles que soy una candidata de doctorado en la Escuela de Estudios Profesionales de Northeastern University en Boston. Actualmente, llevando a cabo mi investigación de tesis, que está enfocada en las experiencias de padres y madres Latinos en la escuela secundaria de su hijo/a.

Para obtener más datos sobre este tema, les invito a participar en mi investigación que consistirá en tres entrevistas que durarán 45 minutos cada una. Les formularé preguntas sobre sus antecedentes y sus experiencias con el personal de la escuela. En la primera entrevista quiero saber sobre su niñez en su país natal. En la segunda entrevista, quiero aprender más acerca de usted, su familia, y por qué llegó a los EEUU. En la tercera entrevista quiero entender sus experiencias con la escuela secundaria pública. Por último, les pediré que verifiquen y confirmen la información que habré grabado. Ustedes tendrán la oportunidad de profundizar en la información proporcionada y formular preguntas en cualquier momento. Su participación en la entrevista es completamente voluntaria y no habrá repercusiones si deciden no participar.

Los criterios para la participación de los padres y las madres incluyen que se trate de un padre o una madre que (1) sea inmigrante (2) sea de Guatemala, y (3) tenga un hijo/a en la escuela secundaria. Las entrevistas son confidenciales.

Si están interesados en participar en este estudio, por favor, pónganse en contacto conmigo llamándome directamente a mi teléfono celular: (617)949-6048 o enviándome un correo electrónico a mi dirección en la universidad: rendon.m@husky.neu.edu. Ustedes NO ESTAN OBLIGADOS a participar en este estudio de manera voluntaria. Si no desean participar, no les afectará de ninguna manera a ustedes o a su hijo/a.

Gracias.
Hello *****

Thank you for expressing interest in participating in my research study. As I mentioned at our Saturday workshop the purpose of this study is to understand your experiences surrounding the education of your child at the high school.

I will want to meet with you on three separate occasion for approximately 45 minutes. As I mentioned earlier, the first interview is to hear about your childhood in your country. The second interview is to learn more about you, your family, and why you came to the U.S. The third interview is to understand your experiences with the public high school. Finally, I will ask you to verify and confirm information that I captured on the recording. You will have the opportunity to elaborate on the information provided and ask follow up questions at any time. Your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and there will be no repercussions if you decide to not participate. The interviews are confidential. Do you have any questions? [respond to questions, if any].

Remember that your participation is voluntary. Are you still interested in participating?

When and where are you available to meet?

Great! Let’s meet ***** at *****.

Thank you and good-bye
Conversación Telefónica Inicial

Hola *****

Gracias por su interés en participar en mi estudio de investigación. Como les comenté en nuestro último taller del sábado, el propósito de este estudio es entender sus experiencias en torno a la educación de su hija/o en la escuela secundaria pública.

Mi intención es reunirnos en tres ocasiones por 45 minutos. Tal y como comenté anteriormente, en la primera entrevista quiero saber sobre su niñez en su país natal. En la segunda entrevista, quiero aprender más acerca de usted, su familia, y por qué llego a los EEUU. En la tercera entrevista quiero entender sus experiencias con la escuela secundaria pública. Por último, le pediré que verifique y confirme la información que habré grabado. Usted tendrá la oportunidad de profundizar en la información proporcionada y formular preguntas en cualquier momento. Su participación en la entrevista es completamente voluntaria y no habrá repercusiones si decide no participar. Las entrevistas son confidenciales. ¿Tiene alguna pregunta? [contestar preguntas, si se hacen].

Recuerde que su participación es voluntaria. ¿Todavía está interesado/a en participar?

¿Dónde y cuándo está disponible para reunirnos?

¡Perfecto! Nos vemos el ***** al *****.

Muchas gracias y adiós.
Appendix F
Unsigned Informed Consent Form

Northeastern University, Department of: Curriculum, Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
Name of Investigator(s):
Dr. Corliss Brown Thompson, Principal Investigator
Mary Jo Rendón, Doctoral Student Researcher

Title of Project: An interpretative phenomenological analysis in education: Exploring immigrant Guatemalan parents’ experiences at an urban high school

Request to Participate in Research
We would like to invite you to take part in a research project. The purpose of this research is to understand the experiences of Guatemalan immigrant parents who have children in a high school.

You must be at least 18 years old to be in this research project. The study will take place at a private place of your choice and will take about 90 minutes in three sessions. If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to answer a series of questions about your experiences interacting with high school members.

Your part in this study will be handled in a confidential manner. Only the researchers will know that you participated in this study. Any reports or publications based on this research will use only group data and will not identify you or any individual as being of this project.

The decision to participate in this research project is up to you. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may withdraw at any time.

You will not be paid for your participation in this study.

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

You may keep this form for yourself.

Thank you.

Mary Jo Rendón
Appendix G

[Spanish version]

DOCUMENTO ACORDADO, COMUNICADO y NO FIRMADO

Northeastern University, Departamento de: Curriculum, Teaching, Learning, and Leadership

Nombres de las investigadoras:
Dr. Corliss Brown Thompson, Investigadora Principal
Mary Jo Rendón, Investigadora Candidata Doctoral

Título del proyecto: Análisis fenomenológico interpretativo en educación: Una exploración de las experiencias de padres Guatemaltecos inmigrantes en una escuela pública secundaria urbana

Solicitud para participar en la investigación
Nos gustaría invitarle a participar en un proyecto de investigación. El propósito de esta investigación es conocer las experiencias de padres y madres Guatemaltecos inmigrantes con hijos en la escuela secundaria.

Debe tener al menos 18 años de edad para participar en este proyecto de investigación. El estudio se llevará a cabo en un lugar privado de su elección y durará aproximadamente 90 minutos distribuidos en tres sesiones. Si decide participar en este estudio, se le pedirá que conteste una serie de preguntas acerca de su experiencia con miembros de la escuela secundaria.

Su participación en este estudio será confidencial. Sólo los investigadores sabrán que participó en este estudio. Todos los informes y publicaciones basadas en la investigación sólo utilizarán los datos del grupo y no se identificará de manera individual a ningún participante en este proyecto.

Usted decide si desea participar en este proyecto de investigación. No es obligatorio participar y usted puede negarse a contestar a cualquier pregunta. En cualquier momento usted puede renunciar a continuar con la entrevista.

No se le retribuirá por su participación en este estudio.

Si tiene alguna pregunta acerca de sus derechos en esta investigación, puede comunicarse con Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Correo electrónico: n.regina@neu.edu. Usted puede llamar de forma anónima si lo desea.

Puede guardar este documento si lo desea.

Gracias.

Mary Jo Rendón
Appendix H

Protocol Parent Interview

Part I: Introduction (spoken to participants)

I want to begin by thanking you for participating in my research study. The purpose of this study is to understand how you support your child’s learning at the high school. The benefits to you in participating in this study are to better educators’ and administrators’ understanding of what they can do to enhance Latino parent engagement at the high school and district level to improve Latina/o student academic achievement.

Do you mind if our conversation is taped? This conversation will be held in confidence. You’re name will not appear and you can chose to not respond to all the questions. [Turn on tape recorder if participant consents]

Family Background

I’d like to start by learning about you and your family.
1. Can you tell me who lives with you at home? (adults, children, ages)
2. Can you tell me about your high school child’s personality, interests both in and out of school?
3. In your view, what are your child’s strengths and weaknesses?
4. What does your child want to do in the future?
   • What would you like to see her/him do in the future?
   • What do you believe about education?
   • What do you want for your child’s education?
5. How would you describe a parent’s role/responsibility in their child’s education?
   • How, if at all, is your perspective about parenting unique based on your identity (i.e. ethnicity, nationality, etc.)
   • How do you feel your perspective on parenting and what you want for your child is different from the perceived norm here in this high school?
5. What is your current marital status?
6. Are you currently working?
   - If so, where do you work?
   - How do you get to work?
   - How many hours do you work?
   - What are your responsibilities at work?
   - Do you like or dislike your work and why?

7. Does your husband/partner work?
   - If so, where does he work?
   - How does he get to work?
   - How many hours does he work?
   - What are his responsibilities at work?
   - Does you like or dislike his work and why?

Your family sounds terrific. Thank you.
Primera Parte: Introducción (hablada a los participantes)

Quiero empezar dándole las gracias por participar en mi estudio de investigación. El propósito de este estudio es entender cómo usted apoya el aprendizaje de su hijo en la escuela secundaria. Los beneficios de participar en este estudio se manifestarán en la mejora de la instrucción y la práctica de los educadores para mejorar el rendimiento académico de los estudiantes Latinos.

¿Me permite grabar nuestra conversación? Esta conversación se llevará a cabo de manera confidencial. Su nombre no aparecerá y usted puede optar por no responder a todas las preguntas. [Encienda la grabadora si hay consentimiento del participante]

Parte I: Antecedentes Familiares

Me gustaría empezar por saber acerca de usted y su familia.

1. ¿Puede usted decirme quien vive con usted en su casa? (adultos, niños, las edades)

2. ¿Puede usted hablarme de la personalidad, los intereses de niño/a que asista la escuela secundaria, tanto dentro como fuera de la escuela?

3. En su opinión, ¿cuáles son las fortalezas y debilidades de su hijo/a?

4. ¿Qué es lo que su hijo/a quiere hacer en el futuro?
   - ¿Qué le gustaría ver a él / ella hacer en el futuro?

5. ¿Cuál es su estado civil actual?

6. ¿Está trabajando actualmente?
   - Si es así, ¿dónde trabaja?
   - ¿cómo llega al trabajo?
   - ¿cuántas horas trabaja?
   - ¿cuáles son sus responsabilidades en el trabajo?
   - ¿Qué le gusta o disgusta de su trabajo y por qué?

7. ¿Su esposo/a / pareja trabaja?
   - Si es así, ¿dónde trabaja?
   - ¿cómo llega él al trabajo?
   - ¿cuántas horas tiene que trabajar?
Part II: Parent Background

[Spoken to parents]

Thank you for continuing with the second part of the interview. Do you have any questions before we begin? May I begin the interview and start the recording? [Start recording if parent has no questions and consents to continuing the interview].

In this interview I want to learn more about you in terms of your family, your home town, your parents’ schooling as well as your childhood schooling and your experiences coming to the United States. Do you have any questions before we continue? [If there are no questions, proceed with the interview].

8. How old are you?

9. What language do you speak at home? What languages did you speak with your parents when you were a child?

10. Where are you from? Describe the people. (probe for identity)

11. Tell me about coming to the US. Why did you decide to come here?
   - Did you experience discrimination in Guatemala? Please describe.
   - What do you like about living here?
   - What is difficult about living here?
   - Do you experience discrimination here? Please describe.
   - How is it different from home?
   - As you know our school/community is diverse with many different ethnicities represented. How is this different from where you are from? How does the diversity affect you and your child?
12. Where did you go to school?
   - What is the highest degree you received?
   - What do you remember about going to school in your town?
   - What do you remember learning at school?
   - Did you learn outside the school? For example, did you learn things at home with your family, grandparents or relatives?
   - How did your parents support your learning both in and out of school?
   - Did your parents ever talk with your teachers?
   - Describe the identity of the teachers in contrast to the identity of the students and parents. Were there similarities or differences?

13. Where did your parents go to school? What did they do for work?
   - What is the highest degree your parents received?

This ends the second part of our interview. Thank you for sharing your story.

[Spanish version]
Protocolo de entrevista con los padres

Segunda Parte: Introducción (hablado a los participantes)

Gracias por continuar con la segunda parte de la entrevista. ¿Tiene alguna pregunta antes de empezar? ¿Puedo comenzar la entrevista y empezar la grabación? [Iniciar la grabación si el padre no tiene preguntas y da su consentimiento para continuar la entrevista].

En esta entrevista quiero aprender más acerca de usted en cuanto a su familia, su ciudad natal, la educación de sus padres y su educación de niñez y de sus experiencias llegando a los Estados Unidos. ¿Tiene alguna pregunta antes de continuar? [Si no hay preguntas, proceda con la entrevista].

8. ¿Cuántos años tiene?
9. ¿Qué idioma habla en casa? ¿Qué idioma hablaban en casa en su niñez?
10. ¿De dónde es?
11. Cuéntame acerca de su llegada a los EE.UU. ¿Por qué decidió venir aquí?
   - En Guatemala, ¿sufrió alguna vez discriminación? ¿Puede describirmelo por favor?
   - ¿Qué le gusta de estar aquí en los EEUU?
   - ¿Qué encuentra difícil de vivir aquí?
• ¿Sufre discriminación aquí? ¿Puede describírmelo por favor?
• ¿Cómo es esta discriminación diferente a la de?
• Como usted puede ver, nuestra escuela y comunidad es diversa, donde diferentes etnias compartan los mismos espacios. ¿Cómo es éste entorno diferente al que dejo atrás en Guatemala? ¿De qué manera esta diversidad le afecta a usted y a su hija/o?

12. ¿Dónde fue a la escuela?

• ¿cuál es el grado más alto que ha recibido?
• ¿qué recuerda haber aprendido en la escuela?
• ¿qué aprendió fuera de la escuela? Por ejemplo, ¿aprendió cosas en casa con su familia, los abuelos o parientes?
• ¿cómo apoyaron sus padres su aprendizaje tanto dentro como fuera de la escuela?
• ¿fueron sus padres alguna vez a hablar con sus maestros?

13. ¿A qué escuela estudiaron sus padres?

¿qué es el grado más alto que sus padres recibieron?

Esto pone fin a la segunda parte de nuestra entrevista. Gracias por compartir su historia.

Part III: Home-School relationship

[Spoken to parents]

Thank you for continuing with the third part of the interview. Do you have any questions before we begin? May I begin the interview and start the recording? [Start recording if parent has no questions and consents to continuing the interview].

In this interview I want to learn your experiences relating to educators at the high school of your child. Do you have any questions before we continue? [If there are no questions, proceed with the interview].

1. Describe how you support your high school student daily (probe here to learn about their general experience of being a parent)
2. How often do you visit your child’s high school?
3. Who comes more to the high school, you, your husband/partner, or both?
4. How do you participate in your child’s education?
5. How often do you participate in school events and activities? What activities and events?
6. What can you tell me about how you communicate with the school and how the school communicates with you?
7. What does the school communicate with you? What do you communicate with the school?
8. What do you do when you have a question about your child’s academic work or well-being?
9. What do you do when your child is not well enough to come to school?
10. How do you feel when the school contacts you? (via phone call or mail)
11. Are you home when your child comes home after school?
   - What supports do you give your child to study or prepare for tests?
   - What are some lessons or values you want your child to learn?
12. Do you know other Latina/o parents with children in the high school?
   - If so, do you talk about your concerns and experiences at the high school?
   - How do other Latina/o parents support their child’s learning?
13. Can you describe what parental engagement at the high school means to you? What does this specifically mean for you as a Latino parent? Why do believe this/how did you come to this understanding?
14. Have you experienced any barriers to parental engagement at the high school? Can you describe the barriers? Share an example.
   - Have you communicated any of these barriers to someone at the high school?
15. What activities, events, or strategies have you experienced that have supported your involvement at the high school?
17. What do you think the high school expects of Latina/o parents?
18. What can the high school educators do to enhance Latina/o parent engagement?
19. What can schools do to empower Latina/o parents?
20. How can schools and teachers help you meet your educational goals for your child?
21. If you could tell teachers what was on your mind related to schooling and your children, what would you say? What is one thing that you want schools/teachers to know about working with Latina/o parents?
22. What gifts/talents/knowledge/experiences/skills do you bring to the school/could you bring to the school as a parent?

Before we finish, I’d like to ask if there is anything else that I have not asked you about. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you again for participating in my study.

[Spanish version]

Tercera Parte: Relación Hogar-Escuela

[Hablado a padres]
Gracias por continuar con la tercera parte de la entrevista. ¿Tiene alguna pregunta antes de empezar? ¿Puedo comenzar la entrevista y empezar la grabación? [Iniciar la grabación si el padre no tiene preguntas y da su consentimiento para continuar la entrevista].

En esta entrevista quiero aprender más acerca de usted en cuanto a su familia, su ciudad natal, su educación de la niñez y de sus experiencias llegando a los Estados Unidos. ¿Tiene alguna pregunta antes de continuar? [Si no hay preguntas, proceda con la entrevista].

14. ¿Con qué frecuencia visita la escuela secundaria de su hijo/a?
15. ¿Quién visita más la escuela secundaria, usted, su esposo / pareja, o ambos?
16. ¿Con qué frecuencia participa en eventos y actividades de la escuela?
17. ¿Qué puede decirme sobre cómo se comunica con la escuela y cómo la escuela se comunica con usted?
   - ¿qué hace cuando tiene alguna duda sobre el trabajo académico de su hijo/a o su bienestar?
   - ¿qué hace cuando su hijo/a no se encuentra lo suficientemente bien como para venir a la escuela?
   - ¿cómo se siente cuando la escuela se pone en contacto con usted? (a través de una llamada telefónica o correo electrónico)

18. ¿Está en su casa cuando su hijo/a llega a casa después de la escuela?
   - ¿Qué apoyos le da a su hijo/a a estudiar o prepararse para las pruebas?
   - ¿Cuáles son algunas lecciones o valores que desea que su hijo/a aprenda?
19. ¿Conoce a otros padres Latinos con niños en la escuela secundaria?
   - Si es así, ¿hablan entre ustedes sobre sus preocupaciones y experiencias en la escuela secundaria?
   - ¿qué hacen otros padres Latinos para apoyar el aprendizaje de sus hijos?
20. ¿Puede describir lo que la participación de padres Latinos en la escuela secundaria significa para usted?
21. ¿Ha vivido barreras en su participación en la escuela secundaria?
   - Si es así, ¿ha comunicado alguna vez estas barreras a alguien en la escuela secundaria?
22. ¿Qué actividades, eventos, o estrategias ha vivido que han apoyado su participación en la escuela secundaria?
23. ¿Cuáles cree usted que puedan ser las expectativas de la escuela secundaria para padres Latinos?
   - ¿Cree que usted cumple con esta expectativa?
24. ¿Qué pueden hacer los educadores de la escuela secundaria para mejorar la participación de los padres y madres Latinos?
• ¿Qué pueden hacer las familias Latinas/os para mejorar su participación en la escuela?

Antes de terminar, me gustaría saber si hay algo más que no le haya preguntado. ¿Tiene alguna pregunta para mí?

Gracias de nuevo por participar en mi estudio.
Appendix I

Certificate of Completion

Human Subject Research Protection

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Mary Jo Rendon successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.

Date of completion: 11/07/2014

Certification Number: 1613395