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Mexican American Parents of Elementary Students and Literacy Engagement: A Case Study of a Bilingual (Spanish/English) Parent Book Club Using Children's Literature

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MEXICAN AMERICAN PARENTS OF ELEMENARY STUDENTS AND LITERACY ENGAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY
OF A BILINGUAL (SPANISH/ENGLISH) PARENT BOOK CLUB USING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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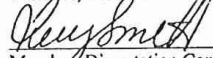Reading & Language Major
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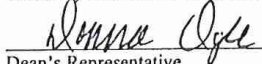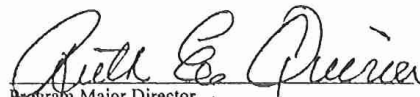
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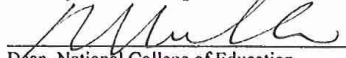
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study explored what occurred when seven Latinx parents and a bilingual coordinator engaged in a book club using the same historical fiction text as the school's fifth grade classroom. Research questions focused on Book Club participation, connections to the focal text(s), and new learning. Data included audiotapes of the sessions, parent written/artistic artifacts, participant interviews, retrospective field notes, and reflective journal entries.

Study findings suggest that positive partnerships between schools and parents can occur within familial text engagement opportunities built on existing relationships with school personnel; use of relevant literature, literacy activities that allow for parent choice and voice, drawing on cultural Funds of Knowledge and life experiences, the autonomy to ask questions and make inferences and connections, and facilitate learning for one another. Finally, the study improved perceptions that parents could better assist their children in learning due to new learning in literacy instruction and reading.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do," (Pele, 2007). This quote best describes my attitude for education and passion for life. As an educator of 24 years, I tend to find those unexpected "teachable moments" with students, parents, and family. Although my family most likely will say, "Dad, take off the teacher hat. You are at home, not at work," teaching is part of my life. These past 10 years have been filled with arduous work that only makes this accomplishment much sweeter. If it weren't for my loving family and my amazing professors, I could not have completed this journey. Their patience and support helped me more than they'll ever know.

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my beautiful wife Rachel, without whom this would not be possible. Your support and love made an enormous impact on my success. Know that your belief in me truly helped me believe in myself, and my success is your success. During this long journey, we faced tough times in our relationship; yet your love, patience, and encouragement gave me the strength to persevere. I love you so much. I dedicate this work to you, Rachel, and our wonderful children. To my children, Sophia, Lucas, and Nathan: during these years, we went through ups and downs; rough times, to say the least. I thank the three of you for putting up with all my frustrations. I thank you for your patience and understanding. You gave me the space and time to complete this work; know that you are loved.

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that illuminated my journey. I may not have been the smartest one in the family, but your faith

in me made me work even harder.

I acknowledge the Latinx parents in my study, for they were just an amazing group of

Along this journey, I had the privilege of working with amazing professors, wonderful

colleagues, and incredible parents. These three groups of people were part of my journey and it

was an unbelievable experience that we shared together. I have so much appreciation and

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you.

I acknowledge the Latinx parents in my study, for they were just an amazing group of

individuals. The group's active participation made the study meaningful as well as fun. Their

trust, cooperation, and commitment helped form a stronger school partnership, but also created a

unique family learning community. Learning about their past, their perspectives, and their goals

has only created new ideas for future endeavors with more groups of parents. I acknowledge that this journey has reinforced my motivation in working with Latinx Spanish-speaking parents so that they can help their children. I look forward in continuing to find those unexpected and precious "teachable moments" with future parent groups.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

A Bilingual Coordinator's Insights into a Parent Committee

It was 7:45 am and the school's first 2016-2017 Bilingual Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting was about to begin. Each year, the BAC elects five elected parent officers: president, vice president, secretary, representative, and alternate representative. We would be having parent officer elections during this meeting. Pleased to see so many active parents in attendance, I greeted them in both English and Spanish as I passed out the agenda. Before I started the meeting, I took a quick poll to see if the parents wanted me to conduct the meeting in English or in Spanish. Given the school's student population is 90% Latinx[1], it was not a surprise that the group requested Spanish. Fifteen minutes into the meeting, I noticed a new parent arriving. She sat down and seemed confused, so I concluded that perhaps she did not understand Spanish and began using both Spanish and English throughout the rest of the meeting. This is just one of many examples where parents have specific language needs that must be met to make a context meaningful. It was my experience at this school, which I will refer to with the pseudonym "America Elementary."

The school where the study takes place is located within a large Midwestern urban district that requires every school with 20 or more English Learners (ELs) to establish a transitional bilingual program of instruction. The district defines an EL as a student who primarily speaks any language other than English. In addition, a state mandate requires schools

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[1] See Key Terms on page 19

to establish a BAC for families of students for whom English is not their native language. America Elementary currently has a total of 94 ELs, a bilingual program, and a BAC.

The ease with which we shifted from Spanish to English and back at that BAC officer election meeting led me to think about how far we had come as a group. I recall my first week as a bilingual coordinator, which was September of the 2005-2006 school year at America Elementary, and how I felt prepared for our first BAC meeting. As parents began to enter the lunchroom, I began welcoming them in Spanish, assuming it was their language of preference. However, after my greeting, a few parents said, "We speak English." I felt embarrassed and quickly apologized, and welcomed them in English. As more parents joined, I made sure to welcome them in both languages.

This experience helped me realize that I neglected to consider how some Latinx parents prefer speaking English. I also overlooked the importance pertaining to the types of cultural differences and external language abilities they were bringing to the BAC meeting. For example, there were Spanish-speaking parents with different birthplaces, such as Mexico and Puerto Rico. Even though they have a common language, their backgrounds were different. To remedy this, I called some of the parents who attended the meeting to ask more questions such as language preferences, family background, school concerns, and ideas for future meetings. Even though making those phone calls was time consuming, it was a positive experience, as parents shared more detailed information about various areas of concern they had with the school and their children's education. Spending that extra time during school and afterschool, was a qualitative opportunity to begin developing a rapport with parents and encourage them to participate in future school meeting and events, thus building a parent-school partnership. I recall how the phone calls also motivated some parents to share their cultural knowledge; for example, some

parents were good at cooking certain traditional Mexican dishes. This eventually led to parents

willingly helping when we had fundraisers, potluck meeting gatherings, and various school

yearly celebrations. In addition, the phone calls served as a proactive approach to demonstrate to

parents my sincere intentions and willingness to listen to their concerns, ideas, and suggestions,

thereby giving them the respect they deserve along with feeling a sense of belonging to a

learning community where their children are the focus and priority.

These experiences have expanded into new parent projects, all of which I facilitate along

with the BAC's input and their hands-on involvement. As a bilingual coordinator, my

responsibilities are to help support our bilingual parents with educational resources and promote

informational academic content similar to what their children experience in their classrooms. In

addition, I am part of our school's administration; therefore, I consider myself a liaison that not

only supports our Spanish-speaking BAC parents, but also our bilingual students and teachers.

As our Spanish-speaking student population continues to grow, there is a greater need to support

our Latinx families, consequently involving them with the school's BAC programs.

Significant Changes in U.S. Schools

Although we have long been a nation of immigrants, it is only within the recent past that

educators and policymakers have begun to understand the importance of providing parents with

access to schools and public education. One specific need is providing support in the parents'

native language, which is increasingly Spanish. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015),

approximately 55.4 million Latinx live in the United States, representing 17.4% of the total

population of 320.1 million. Further, it is projected that this percentage will increase to 38% by

2060 (Escamilla, 2009; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). In addition, of the 55.4 million Hispanics

living in the United States, it is estimated that 65% of the Hispanic population is of Mexican

descent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). It is important to note that this figure does not include many undocumented individuals who do not respond to formal surveys like the U.S. Census, as well as individuals residing in and traveling back and forth from Puerto Rico (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

Due to the significant number of U.S. families whose first language is Spanish and whose nation of origin is Mexico, it is imperative that schools consider methods to educate these children, as well as provide experiences that both educate and acculturate parents. Studies show the English Learner (EL) student population continues to increase nationally (Escamilla, 2009; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009, 2011). This requires teachers to explore different teaching strategies stemming from theoretical frameworks. In addition to changes in teaching methods, school personnel must also consider how to address the issue of Latinx parents who are unable to help their children achieve academic success due to language barriers, as well as their own low literacy skills (Escamilla, 2009; Census Bureau, 2015). Through integration of various parent engagement opportunities in both English and Spanish, parents can be motivated to participate in more school events and functions.

Statement of the Problem

Population statistics suggest that the number of Latinx children who attend U.S. schools will continue to increase. Likewise, the number of Spanish-speaking Latinx parents who need support as they try to help their children become literate will increase as well. This growing demographic of support-seeking parents will continue to impact school settings, so educators should try to understand the home culture of these families to develop effective ways to interact with parents while supporting these learners. Further, current research indicates that the majority of these families likely have a low socio-economic status (McWayne, Melzi, Schick, Kennedy,

& Mundt, 2013; National Research Council, 2006; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (NRCIM), 2000; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). This may result in increasing numbers of students demonstrating learning difficulties and/or low academic achievement (McWayne et al., 2013; National Research Council [NRC], 2006). In addition, Latinx students have one of the highest dropout rates among ethnic minority students nationwide (Fry, 2010; McWayne et al., 2013). Therefore, schools need to consider how they will address the needs of these students, which may also call for new approaches in supporting parents so that they can help their children be successful in school.

While some educators might argue against the need to address the changes that will come with this new demographic which is evident in many schools, research shows that it is necessary for schools to engage in "promoting positive family experiences . . . this will help to address the broad achievement gap between European American and ethnic minority children in the United States," (McWayne et al., 2013, pg. 593). As the Latinx population in the United States continues to increase, schools need to find ways of addressing the needs of parents and their children through different ways of communication. According to Good, Masewicz, and Vogel (2010), lack of mutual understanding between the school and Latinx parents can discourage parental involvement. Communication difficulties can create barriers and conflicts between schools and families that negatively impact student achievement (Epstein, 1995). Schools with Latinx families should be permitted to choose the type of extracurricular programs, enrichment family events, and/or what they may feel are meaningful schooling opportunities similar to those of their children's learning, such as school technology-based educational programs, health awareness, and cross-curricular subject area learning strategies, to name a few. This will establish a connection with parents to school involvement, which is a critical component in

developing a successful school and student-learning environment (Olivos, Jiménez-Castellanos, & Ochoa, 2011).

Rationale for the Study

It is my opinion that there is a continuous need for schools to establish meaningful efforts to provide parent workshops and/or to take part in educational and social events that connect them to their child's learning. These opportunities should be engaging, as well as informative and entertaining. If schools offer engaging opportunities, parents can feel part of the school which may possibly lead to positive learning experiences and promote parent responsiveness. Latinx parents in particular should have input when determining what types of programs to implement. According to Olivos et al. (2011), some schools do not provide enough support to Latinx parents to aid in their understanding of the school system, nor do they respect the voice of the parents when they raise concerns about school inadequacies and unequal parental involvement opportunities.

When I conducted my study during the 2016-2017 school year, I was America Elementary's bilingual coordinator and I worked with Spanish-speaking parents to provide engaging opportunities such as academic school curriculum workshops, informational bilingual sessions, and parent educational field trips. The goal for creating these engaging opportunities was to invite all bilingual parents to expose them to new learning experiences and increase parent involvement at school. As the coordinator, I would ask for parent input when providing them workshops or events. While I gave consideration and choice for parents, parents often become frustrated when the school staff is not receptive to bilingual parent needs, which can lead them to believe the school does not understand the Spanish language or Latinx culture, indicating that learning is not a priority for their children (Good et al., 2010). To address this problem, our

school created a Latinx parent committee called the Bilingual Advisory Committee (BAC), where parents can provide input on topics they would like to explore. By providing an avenue to make suggestions and voice concerns, the committee enables parents to provide input about the school; thus, the school is more likely to respond with positivity to benefit the school and its students.

Based on previous interactions with parents, such as educational workshops/programs and extracurricular family events, a qualitative research study would explore the types of parental text engagement opportunities resulting from a book club reading program for Latinx parents. As a result of my work experience with Latinx parents, I developed a strong rapport with members of the BAC which allowed me to facilitate their Book Club. While my research will not focus on the effects of the Book Club to the development of the parents' literacy, I will explore how the Latinx parent Book Club demonstrates active participation through text engagement during our meetings/sessions. Also, I will investigate how the selected texts may influence their ability in making connections to the texts as well as demonstrating evidence of learning so they are able to help their children with reading at home. In addition, if parents are able to demonstrate new learning, such as with specific literacy strategies and certain reading techniques similar to those in their children's classroom, they may be able to foster a strong reading relationship reflective of their shared interactions to assist with their understanding of texts.

Bilingual Advisory Committee (BAC): Supporting Parents

At America School, parents are sent letters in both English and Spanish that invite them to BAC meetings and include a brief description of the topic/workshop on the agenda each month. Each meeting has specific goals that emphasize parent engagement. During these

meetings, time is allotted for parents to discuss issues pertaining to the school. Parents are invited to voice their concerns and provide both positive and negative feedback, which can be addressed during the meeting or tabled until a more thorough answer is identified. The BAC has between 10 and 15 active parent participants, with some parents having students in the school's bilingual program, although most do not because their children have exited from the program after passing the state English assessment. Regardless of whether the child is active in the bilingual program, the BAC is open to all parents.

Working with Parents

Many parents in the BAC did not have educational connections to the school or to their children's academic achievement. Instead, the meetings became an opportunity to vent about school issues, such as the building itself or the teachers. Most of the complaints were related to individual parent needs and served to "air out" their feelings, which was not necessarily relevant to others in attendance. Parents were provided the opportunity to expand their involvement at the school through workshops; however, attendance at these sessions was low. Further, the BAC lacked clear avenues of communication, offered minimal parent workshops, and was missing a parent–student component.

At the same time, there was a small yet cohesive group of parents who attended these meetings on a consistent basis. Thus, I decided to hold a separate meeting with this small group, together with the officers from the BAC, so as to generate ideas and suggestions for future BAC meetings and develop a more valuable experience for parents to support their children's education. During its first year in 2004, this small group established as its main goal to encourage all parents (not just Latinx Spanish-speaking parents) to participate in planned activities. In addition, the group decided to try to develop stronger communication and trust

between parents and the school by connecting teachers and administrators with families. This focus on developing a sense of trust, as well as building both school and parent commitment, can help develop a deeper school-parent partnership (Olivos, et al., 2011; Sanders, 2008).

Perspective from the School and Researcher

The administration at America Elementary understands the importance of communication with parents, the development of new and innovative programs, and the key role both parents and teachers play in improving the education of all students. Over the years, America Elementary has seen significant changes in student demographics. Thirty years ago, America Elementary had a large Serbian, German, and Polish population. Now, according to the 2017-2018 school district's report card, the demographics have changed to 0.3% Asian, 1.1% Black, 90.8% Latinx, 7.1% White, and 0.7% Other, with 75% of the student population identified as low income. The total student population is comprised of 877 students and continues to grow.

Within this larger context, I played the role of the bilingual coordinator and the reading specialist at America Elementary. As such, I worked to develop positive relationships with parents, teachers, and administrators through surveys and conversations during BAC meetings. Towards the end of the first school year of the BAC, parents concluded that they needed more resources to further cultivate a stronger parent-school partnership. Through a collaboration with parents, administrators, and teachers, the BAC took part in initiating a new support system in which parents had decision-making opportunities and received the necessary tools to expand their literacy opportunities. In the 11 years that followed, this process has led to partnerships with the local library, two universities, and civic and business organizations.

Situating the Study

Parent Interests

America Elementary's BAC tries to provide various activities that parents may enjoy. One activity of interest for parents attending BAC meetings is the Book Club, which is the focus of this research study. As schools move forward with new curricula, technology-based student assessments, and various learning programs, they need to provide parents more engaging opportunities in order to support parent involvement efforts for a successful school. In limited explorations of a book club setting sponsored by the BAC, it appeared that this engaging parent program may help foster the literacy skills of both parents and their children, as well as provide meaningful school-parent-student-connections.

This study's Latinx Parent Book Club seemed to provide a unique experience for parents to bond with their children through meaningful discussions related to the classroom reading curriculum. Keep in mind, there have been parent book clubs at America Elementary in the past, and the parents selected the texts. The parents participating in America Elementary's Book Club selected the text that was utilized in the study. Also, they expressed how they would like to learn about what their children experience in their own reading classrooms. For example, the parents voted to read a children's chapter book that the entire fifth-grade class would also be reading. Consequently, book sessions with this title incorporated activities that teachers utilized within their classrooms, such as using graphic organizers, review of specific chapter sections, and instruction in making connections (text-to-self and text–to-world), so as to potentially provide parents with opportunities to bring their own literacy experiences back to their homes and discuss the book with their children. In addition to children's literature, parents also selected books with adult content, such as cultural traditions from Mexico and self-help topics.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the interactions of Latinx Spanish-speaking parents within an America Elementary BAC-sponsored book club. The study explored Spanish-speaking Latinx parent-school text engagement, how parents can build their literacy skills, and whether they were able to make connections to historical fictional text. In addition, it explored whether the Book Club can provide an opportunity to engage parents and increase their own understanding of what takes place in their own child's reading classroom. Moreover, the study sought to determine the types of engagement within America Elementary's Book Club and its role in developing parent involvement and building a partnership between the school and Latinx Spanish-speaking parents. I sought to emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships, as well as gain a strong understanding through empirical inquiry through investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 1984).

This study aimed to evaluate how a book club could support parents in their efforts to increase their literacy skills, encourage parental learning experiences, and increase parental capacity and commitment to work with their children. Schools need to help build parental capacity especially when working with Spanish-speaking parents, so they in turn can assist their children through engaging programs such as English literacy development, parenting ideas, and student related activities (Illinois State Board of Education, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2002). It is important to keep in mind that building parent capacity that promotes and enhances parent involvement is a requirement for all schools (No Child Left Behind, 2002).

Research Questions

The overarching question that serves as the focus for this study is: How are Latinx Spanish-speaking parents impacted by engaging in a book club using the same historical fiction text as that currently studied by the school's fifth-grade students? Sub-questions deriving from the primary research question include:

1. How do Latinx parents demonstrate text engagement in the America Elementary's parent Book Club?

2. How do Latinx parents make connections to texts within the America Elementary's parent Book Club?

3. What do Latinx parents report as new learning as a result of their interactions with the focal texts and other participants in the parent Book Club experience?

Importance of the Study

Parents benefit from being exposed to school educational opportunities that build their reading capacity through various literacy activities (Olivos, et al., 2011; Sanders, 2008). By providing parent involvement opportunities, schools can help Latinx parents learn, grow, and achieve personal goals, which promotes the school's ability to support these culturally diverse families (Olivos, et al., 2011). By having Latinx parents take part in school events such as a book club, a parent-school partnership can be established.

A parent-school partnership can encourage parents to help their children at home with reading, thus creating a parent-child connection with positive experiences (Olivos, 2006; Ortiz, & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005). When Spanish-speaking parents are able to help their bilingual child at home with reading, it helps dispel the myth of Latinx parents not wanting to be involved with their child's academic development (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006). Given the increase of Spanish-

speaking ELs, providing Spanish-speaking parents with engagement opportunities can also create positive academic achievement student results (Olivos, et al., 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). I set out to specifically investigate Latinx parent engagement and explore how the school, through the BAC, can support parents so that they may be empowered to expand their own literacy development and, by extension, that of their children.

This study is important to America Elementary due to the opportunity it provides for Spanish-speaking Latinx parents to take part in an engaging activity such as a Book Club. Other schools, whether experiencing demographic changes or not, can benefit from this study, given that it examines communication between parents and administration through a bilingual coordinator or a teacher liaison. In addition, this study can also provide insights for other schools, especially those with a significant population of Spanish-speaking parents. Schools can try to establish avenues of communication through educational opportunities, such as developing their own parent book clubs. A parent book club can also lead to other types of parental involvement, thus creating new opportunities that can be a mutual benefit for both parents and the school.

Overview of the Study

The subsequent chapters will complete the study as follows: Chapter Two provides a literature review which describes the theoretical framework. The study's theoretical framework features sociocultural and schema theory. It incorporates key areas such as culture, multicultural education, and Latinx cultures. It also provides significant research from connections to Funds of Knowledge including parental involvement and active participation by means of engaging parents with programs of their choice. In addition, this chapter cites family literacy with emphasis placed on book clubs. Chapter Three provides the study's methodology and Chapter

Four elaborates its findings. Chapter Five provides summary analysis of the findings, it includes implications and future research, and a conclusion.

Key Terms

Latinx

Latinx is the gender-neutral alternative to *Latino/a*, pronounced "La-teen-ex."

Latinx includes people who are trans, queer, agender, non-binary, gender non-conforming, or gender fluid (Castro, & Cortez, 2017; Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005; Tello & Lonn, 2017). The term *Latinx* is a Spanish-language term that has increased in usage since the introduction of the term Hispanic (Rodriguez, 2000). For the purpose of this research study, the term *Latinx*, a variant of *Latino* will be used as it both refers to "people generally related to Latin American origin or ancestry" (Jasis, 2000, p. 22).

English Learner/s (EL/s)

English Learner (EL), also referred to as English Language Learner (ELL) and previously referred to as Limited English Proficient (LEP), is an individual who has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language due to various circumstances, such as not being born in the United States or having a native language other than English or coming from environments where a language other than English is dominant, and is in the process of attaining proficiency in English (Wright, 2015).

CHAPTER TWO

The Review of the Literature

Introduction

At the heart of this study are questions related to how Latinx parents interact with texts their children read as a part of the school curriculum during a home-school literacy event. Garcia (2004) articulated the meaning of home-school partnership in the statement: "The responsibility for initiating and maintaining parent involvement initiatives in schools must be perceived as a shared process with the school, home, and community" (p. 291). The Latinx parents participating in the school's Book Club are exposed to literacy experiences similar to those incorporated by their child's reading classroom, thus creating a shared experience and fostering a school-parent partnership. This chapter reviews key theoretical and conceptual stances that will influence this study. Also, this study is primarily based on Sociocultural theory perspective due to the practice of the Spanish language as well as the acquisition of the English language by means of social and cultural aspects of the parent Book Club social interactions. Sociocultural theory connects to the conceptual framework of Funds of Knowledge through social and cultural interactions made by the Latinx Spanish-speaking parents (Moll, 2005).

According to Moll (1992), the Funds of Knowledge theorizing practices focuses on the understanding that parents have their own knowledge and experiences, which can provide meaningful connections among other parents within a book club setting. In addition, a theory which connects Funds of Knowledge is schema theory. Schema theory emphasizes the intricacies of the Book Club by organizing their current knowledge of themes or specific topics from the focal texts, thus being able to build on their knowledge with the use the study's reading activities (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). Furthermore, Freire's (1970) theory of critical pedagogy

provides relevant information on how schools should fully understand students and parents, and learn about their background experiences as well as have critical dialogue (Lyons, 2001). Moreover, the concept of multiculturalism is an important foundation in the research due to historical educational perspectives (Olivos, 2006; Ortiz, & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005). These theories and conceptual framework will allow the reader to better understand parent text engagement, connections to text, and how the group will be able to help their children with reading through the study's literacy activities. The following sections provide an overview of each of these theories and conceptual framework impacts the design and data analysis of the study.

<div align="center">**Theoretical Framework**</div>

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural Theory, also referred to as "Social Constructivism" by Vygotsky, suggests that learning takes place as a result of social interactions and shared activities with peers (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotskian theory examines the relationship between language learning and development through a sociocultural experience (Bruner, 1985; Wertsch, 2007). Leiman (2002) emphasizes Vygotsky's concept of semiotic mediation in human development. This concept of semiotic mediation, which includes language, signs, and symbols, establish connections across fundamental relationships between mental functions and discourse within the context of social and cultural activity (Bruner, 1985; Halliday, 1978; Hasan, 2002; Leiman, 2002; Wertsch, 2007). This is key for parental involvement through engaging opportunities, especially when it has a significant Latinx parent population where language differences may play a role in parental involvement. Since language differences should not hinder parent-school communication, schools still should acknowledge the need for effective translations and have systems in place wherein knowledgeable school staff such as a bilingual coordinator, bilingual teachers, or

bilingual office personnel can help Spanish-speaking parents expand their own learning in ways that can support their children. Vygotsky's theory also contains key constructs that influences this study, such as the role of the "More Knowledgeable Other," the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and the use of sign systems.

Sociocultural Theory emphasizes the role of social, cultural, and historical events on people particularly how the "More Knowledgeable Other" can heavily influence learning (Tracey & Morrow, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). This theory helps to explain the role parents can play in a child's learning through parent-school discourse, as it may guide parental involvement and lead to experiences that empower parents to provide home support for children (Vygotsky, 1978). Key to understanding the potential influence of the "More Knowledgeable Other" is another Vygotskian principal, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which refers to "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, pg. 86). Simply stated, this refers to what the learner can do with support and suggests that during group-learning experiences, individuals with less knowledge of a given task and/or a topic develop and learn with help from other group members and/or the group leader.

According to Vygotsky (1978), in a ZPD environment, when given a specific task the learner requires guidance to understand what is being taught. Assistance from the "More Knowledgeable Other" provides the learner with the means to achieve the goal (Tracey & Morrow, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). Latinx parents can benefit from the necessary guidance from other parents and/or school facilitators as they strive to understand the experiences their children encounter during the school day. Parents can develop meaningful discussions by sharing their

thoughts on a given topic or during a parent hands-on activity. Further, they may feel more comfortable talking with another parent or peer than talking with a representative of the school. At the same time, it is key to include a school representative who acts as a "More Knowledgeable Other" and can help the group maintain the intended focus and clarify confusion resulting from reading texts. Such facilitation can generate parent discourse resulting in positive engaging learning experiences. For example, if a "More Knowledgeable Other" (e.g., a parent or a representative from the school) leads a parent book discussion, some parents may be more receptive and engaged, thus building their confidence when supporting their children's reading at home. Furthermore, this experience may empower parents to expand their own literacy knowledge base and possibly develop learning interests for additional educational school-sponsored events and literacy programs

The third key component of Vygotsky's theory is the role of sign systems in the development of thought, which relates directly to literacy development since the written language essentially consists of signs. Individuals interpret signs regularly as they navigate their lives. Some signs are simple, such as the Mc Donald's "golden arches" that signify a fast food restaurant; others, such as literary texts, are more complex. Within this range are some common classroom tools teachers use to support reading comprehension. For example, a graphic organizer is intended to help learners develop a mental representation of the relationship of ideas in a text. Parents, particularly those whose own school learning experiences may not have included such mental tools, can benefit from such experiences that broaden their own understanding of learning, as well as strengthen their own literacy development (Smagorinsky, 2012; Tracey & Morrow, 2012).

While Vygotsky's construct about the role of the "More Knowledgeable Other" informs of the dynamic between "teacher" and "learner," it does not describe how learning takes place (Smagorinsky, 2012; Tracey & Morrow, 2012). That is, his theory describes ZPD, but does not explain how this "other" provides support for learning. Therefore, other scholars expanded Vygotsky's ideas by defining the role of the teacher as one who provides "scaffolding" to support learning (Edwards, 1990; Edwards, & García, 1999; Halliday, 1978; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Smagorinsky, 2012; Tracey & Morrow, 2012; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). According to Wood and his colleagues, "scaffolding" learning incorporates "those elements of the task that are initially beyond the learner's capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence" (p. 76). That is, "scaffolding" provides the learner only enough support to enable them to complete a task successfully and once the learner is able to effectively accomplish the given task independently, the scaffolding is no longer needed (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Halliday, 1978; Wood et al. 1976).

In addition to providing a metaphor to understand the learning process between adult and learner, Bruner (1996) creates a deeper connection to Vygotsky's ideas by arguing that educational practices are fundamentally based on larger cultural frameworks, stating that the aims, purposes, and processes of education differ from one culture to another (Bruner, 1996). Thus, if educational and home practices are both grounded in different in cultural beliefs and practices, it is then helpful for parents to understand how to effectively support their children's learning at school. Such support and scaffolding needs to come from the school because it is the school's culture that parents must learn. Therefore, research that explores parental as well as

student learning through commonly used school practices can inform educators of ways to bridge gaps between home and school literacy practices.

In Durkin's (1966) research, she indicates that home literacy experiences have positive effects in children's school success. Further research on family literacy will be provided in this chapter. Moll and Greenberg's (1991) also validates Durkin's assertion, but also emphasizes Vygotsky's sociocultural theoretical concepts. I firmly believe Vygotsky's contributions can help to connect home and school literacy practices between parents and their children and as previously mentioned, as well as can create positive learning experiences that in turn, advance their literacy school/classroom practices. For example, other research on literacy and learning has expanded on the Vygotsky's ideas by studying home interactions between teacher and learner (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Roser & Martinez, 1985; Smagorinsky, 2012; Teale, 1981, 1984). According to Vygotsky (1978, 1986), dialogue occurring between the "more knowledgeable" person and the learner is an important factor in development because the learner internalizes social interaction (i.e., dialogue), which later results in the learner being capable of controlling his/her own problem-solving. The successful learning leads to the progression to the next stage of development (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986) and interactions within any setting result in participants shifting roles, depending on the topic/activity.

When the school provides workshops for parents that focus on ways of talking about texts, parents often assume the role of the tutee and the school/instructor is the tutor (Moll & Greenberg, 1991; Vygotsky 1978, 1986). Further, by engaging in a book club discussion around a text assigned in school, parents can develop their own awareness of literacy development, which means they can build self-confidence when helping their children read (Durkin, 1966; Edwards, 1990, Morrow & Young, 1997). If the parent feels confident enough they may take on

the role of the tutor, thus supporting their child's reading (Morrow, 1990; Morrow & Young, 1997; Teale, 1981). While this study does not examine parent-child interactions, it does investigate the self-reported development of parental expertise when reading, discussing, and analyzing the texts their children read as part of the school curriculum. If parents gain a deeper understanding of what the children experience as learners, they may be better prepared to support their children in school. By providing parents with educational experiences that mirror those their children will encounter, a parent book club may provide the tools necessary to support the literacy development of their children.

In the context of learning, Vygotsky argues that the development of the learner within a ZPD involves social interaction, dialogue, and mediated activity (Edwards & García, 1999; Moll & Greenberg, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). In addition, Wertsch (2007) maintains that mediation is a central theme throughout Vygotsky's writing and notes that human consciousness is associated with the use of tools. To learn abstract concepts, such are reading for meaning, "psychological tools" or "signs" serve as the primary devices for learning. Thus, instead of acting in a direct, unmediated way in the social and physical world, the learner's contact is indirect, mediated by signs, particularly when trying to understand the development of higher mental processes (Wertsch, 2007). Moreover, Wertsch (2002) claims that "action and mind are fundamentally shaped both by the 'cultural tools' and 'mediational means' that individuals and groups employ" (p. 105).

Moll (2000) summarizes these ideas proposed by Wertsch in terms of the importance of mediation to learning: "To put it simply, human beings interact with their worlds primarily through mediational means; and these mediational means, the use of cultural artifacts, tools and symbols, including language, play crucial roles in the formation of human intellectual

capacities." (p. 257). Lantolf (2000) also states that the human mind is mediated by what is referred to as semiotic mediation, which Vygotsky calls "tools" in humans and allows us to understand the world and ourselves. It is with these tools that the student, parent, and teacher are able to interact with others within society and develop learning at the same time. It can also embed the knowledge that the child/family has in order to bring these cultural connections and build on to their learning capacity, since learning experiences include social situations in and out of school (Edwards, 1990; Edwards, & García, 1999; Israel & Duffy, 2008; Lantolf, 2000; Tracey & Morrow, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky's theory can also shape how instruction should be guided when communicating with parents. From a socio-historical theoretical perspective, reading requires the individual to engage in culturally defined ways, using text as they participate in meaningful social activities (Israel & Duffy, 2008). That is, not only does the text matter, but so does the activity surrounding it. In addition, Vygotsky argued that learning is most affected by the mastery of sign systems, such as the alphabet, words, listening, speaking, and writing (Edwards, 1990; Edwards, & García, 1999; Tracey & Morrow, 2012). For example, a parent book club can use literacy tools, such as graphic organizers, activities, and texts which teachers use to support the reading comprehension for their students. Thus, parents can share reading experiences their children may encounter in reading class.

Educational leaders providing parent workshops should consider the tenets of socio-cultural theory when facilitating the instruction and disseminating information. That is, they should not perceive their own culture, patterns of interaction, or values as the only ones that guide instruction and parent-teacher interactions. Instead, they should develop dispositions that enable them to learn how other cultures engage in learning. In addition, research is needed to

explore how to support parents as they read the same texts their children will read in school.

Such a design should incorporate the same tools teachers use that support students'

comprehension of the same texts. For example, by using a parent book club format in which the

teacher-facilitator plays the role of the "More Knowledgeable Other," parents may be better able

to learn from each one another. Within the book club setting, parental interactions can provide

meaningful experiences when guided by this "More Knowledgeable Other," who can prompt

rich text discussions (Dodson & Baker, 1977; Edwards, 1990; Edwards, & García, 1999; Moll &

Greenberg, 1991; Morrow, 1990).

A book club is structured to promote specific dialogue that lends itself to literacy learning

and can empower parents as readers and supporters of their own children's reading instruction

(Chandler, 1999; Dodson & Baker, 1977; Morris & Kaplan, 1994; Morrow, 1990). Furthermore,

by exposing parents to various types of literature and allowing them to make and share personal

connections to the text, a book club can foster an affinity for reading for pleasure. This type of

outlook can further the parents' literacy skills, which can then enhance their ability to support

their children as they progress through school (Chandler, 1999; Dodson & Baker, 1977; Morris

& Kaplan, 1994; Morrow, 1990). Moreover, the focus on the role of the "More Knowledgeable

Other" within a context that provides tools that support the mediation of meaning construction,

parents may develop their own literacy abilities (Dodson & Baker, 1977; Israel & Duffy, 2008;

Lantolf, 2000; Moll & Greenberg, 1991; Tracey & Morrow, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). This

development can help parents engage in deep conversations surrounding the text. Further, by

adopting the tools teachers use during instruction, parents may develop mental frameworks that

enable them to develop a deeper understanding of texts, as well as their own literacy

development (Edwards, 1990; Edwards, & García, 1999; Moll & Greenberg, 1991; Tracey &

Morrow, 2012). With such awareness, it may enable them to understand better the expectations

the school places on their children as they strive to become literate.

Schema Theory

Schema theory explains learning in relationship to stored knowledge, the function and

process of interpreting new information, and building on to already stored knowledge (Anderson

& Pearson, 1984; Rumelhart, 1980; Ruddell, Ruddell, & Singer, 1994; Ruddell, & Unrau, 1994;

Tracey & Morrow, 2012). According to Anderson and Pearson (1984), schema is the interaction

between old and new material and is an abstract knowledge structure that represents relationships

between new and old information. Moreover, Schema Theory indicates that knowledge

structures change through accretion, tuning, and restructuring, and thus, focuses on the

importance of utilizing existing knowledge to acquire new knowledge (Anderson & Pearson,

1984). By activating students' background knowledge (schemata) prior to reading texts, teachers

can build stronger connections in order to facilitate comprehension of the text (Carrell, 1984;

Carrell, & Eisterhold, 1983; Tracey & Morrow, 2012). In addition, there are schemata or units

of knowledge that represent knowledge about concepts such past or present experiences of

individuals and is stored information, thus a schema is formed as conceptual for the learner

(Rumelhart, 1980; Ruddell, Ruddell, & Singer, 1994; Ruddell, & Unrau, 1994).

Individuals, including parents, may develop mental representations of knowledge because

they have their own schema and by activating prior knowledge, teachers and parent liaisons or

coordinators can help students and parents develop deeper comprehension levels of the studied

topic/lesson (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Edwards, 1990; Edwards & García, 1999; Morrow,

1990; Morrow & Young, 1997). When reading a text, such as that in a book club, parents can

draw upon their own schemata for learning and comprehension. In these cases, scaffolded

learning takes place, since schemata have openings that the reader uses to integrate information for possible connections (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Pearson, 2009).

Scaffolding is an instructional strategy that can allow the individual to move toward a stronger understanding of the text and can link possible learning breaks, thus further developing the learning process (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Raymond, 2000). In addition, schemata allow the reader to selectively allocate attention to determine what is important, which sharpens the skill of making inferences from the text (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Moll & Greenberg, 1991; Pearson, 2009; Rumelhart, 1980). Schools can acknowledge that Latinx parents have a unique schema and create engaging and instructional opportunities for them with literature that allows them to use their schema, and draw from their prior experiences that relate and/or connect with the selected text. By making these connections, parents will be able activate their prior knowledge to better understand and increase their comprehension of the focal text, because "schema theory tells us that prior knowledge is essential for comprehension of new knowledge" (Gabriel & Gabriel, 2010, p. 679). Book clubs can allow parents to use their schemata and scaffold information in order to further develop their literacy skills.

Summary of Theoretical Frameworks

Sociocultural and schema research provides us with the understanding that these theories share learner-centered features, which can also provide awareness into collaborative instructional literacy approaches for parents as well as their children's reading development (Edwards & García, 1999; Halliday, 1978; Hasan, 2002; Smagorinsky, 2012; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991; Vygotsky, 1980; Wells, 1999; Wertsch, 1993). In my opinion, these theories do take into account the social and cultural aspects of acquiring knowledge and can advance the parent's

reading learning potential through at-home discussions of text/s with their children (Auerbach, 1989; Chandler, 1999; DeBruin-Parecki, 2003; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). For example, text dialogue shared between parents and their children through the application of specific reading activities can increase their child's reading academic level (DeBruin-Parecki, 2003; Dodson & Baker, 1997; Edwards & García, 1999; Morrow, & Young, 1997). Since parents already bring their own schemata, reading activities that are provided by school-sponsored programs, such as a parent book club and led by a bilingual coordinator, can also help create deep text connections during their book discussions (Carrell, 1984; Carrell, & Eisterhold, 1983; Rumelhart, 1980; Ruddell, Ruddell, & Singer, 1994). Through text discussions, parents may have similar text connections due to their schemata similarities, which quite possibly relate to their cultural backgrounds.

As previously mentioned, Schema theory states that all knowledge is organized into learning units or schemata (Rumelhart, 1980; Ruddell, Ruddell, & Singer, 1994). A schema, then, is a generalized description or a conceptual system for understanding how knowledge is represented and how it is used (Rumelhart, 1980; Ruddell, Ruddell, & Singer, 1994). From a Sociocultural constructivist point view of reading involving the reader (parent or child), the teacher (bilingual coordinator) and the focal text/s, they form a learning community are all comprised in the construction of meaning as they scaffold their knowledge (Carrell, 1984; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Raymond, 2000; Ruddell, & Unrau, 1994; Rumelhart, 1980). As an instructional strategy, scaffolding can allow the learner to move toward a stronger understanding, thus further developing the learning process (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Raymond, 2000). Scaffolding relates to the guidance or help from a someone who has more knowledge in a specific concept, activity, ability, etc., and it is a term that developed from the

concept of the ZPD (Edwards & García, 1999; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Moll & Greenberg, 1991; Rumelhart, 1980; Ruddell, & Unrau, 1994; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991; Vygotsky, 1980; Wells, 1999; Wertsch, 1993). The benefits of Schema theory and scaffolding strategies can support educational experiences within a classroom and, in this case, a parent book club. Both Sociocultural and Schema theory are key within a parent Book Club, since culture and language are essential aspects of the Vygotskian framework; therefore, it provides a process of internalization of social interaction in the construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1980; Wells, 1999; Wertsch, 1993).

Culture, Education, and Biliteracy

Culture

Several researchers – including Banks and Banks (1995), Becker (1982), Bruner (1996), Gollnick and Chinn (2013), Mill (1992), Moll (1992), Moll and Greenberg (1991), and Schall (2010) – define culture using similar terms. Because culture has different meanings for different groups of people, it is important to define how it will be considered for this research. Thus, culture is defined as a complex concept that contains linguistic and communicative patterns, belief systems, values, geographic location, social class, and many other aspects of a given group of individuals that it is transmitted from one generation to the next (Banks & Banks, 1995a; Gollnick & Chinn, 2013; Schall, 2010). Further, scholars note that culture is dynamic, shared, and transformed by a group of people, and that it "cannot be reduced to holidays, foods, or dances, although these are, of course, elements of culture" (Nieto 1999, p. 48).

Culture is a key component within school programs and activities as well as the surrounding neighborhoods, as these cultures can establish a flow or avenue of communication that can surface in parent group discussions (Moll & Greenberg, 1991; Moll, 1992; Nieto, 1999).

Schools are encouraged to try to understand the culture of their students' families, since students bring their prior knowledge to their classrooms. Thus, it is important to understand that culture is specific to children, as well as their parents. In addition, understanding the cultures of the student population will help educators develop and incorporate culturally relevant, content-based curriculum components (Baldwin, Faulkner, Hecht, & Lindsley, 2006; Moll & Greenberg, 1991; Raphael, Florio-Ruane, & George, 2001). Moreover, to support families, the school can provide engaging programs and activities relevant to the parents' needs. However, this may pose a challenge since school employees often do not share the same culture as the parents, and parents may not share the same culture with each other.

Banks (1995) recommends that schools can learn more about their Latinx families through what he refers to as mapping engagements, which explore traditions, as well as the development of specific aspects of cultural identity. These mapping activities increase Latinx parent involvement based on their own lives because by sharing cultural traditions and practices in a school activity demonstrates the importance of their backgrounds and values. Further, as parents share, they become important contributors to their child's education (Banks, 1995a; Moll, 1992; Nieto, 1999). An example of a mapping engagement can be found in parent literacy programs.

By incorporating home culture as a valued component in family literacy programs, educators help parents feel respected and part of the school (Moll & Greenberg, 1991; Moll, 1992; Nieto, 1999; Raphael, Florio-Ruane, & George, 2001). According to Edwards and García (1999), one way to demonstrate this commitment is to help parents participate in a school program and interact with educators about the curriculum to build a triangle of knowledge between the parents, the teachers, and the students, as well as supports parents who want to help

their children at home. Therefore, the deeper the educators understand the culture of the parents, the better they can build bridges between school and home (Edwards & García, 1999; Morrow & Young, 1997; Purcell-Gates, 2000). Additionally, schools can better comprehend the culture of the parents by providing specific activities that they request, so that they may feel part of the school's learning community; in this way, parent choice is key (Edwards & García, 1999; Moll, 1992; Morrow & Young, 1997; Nieto, 1999; Purcell-Gates, 2000).

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education in U.S. schools has been at the forefront of school policy and an ongoing consideration for many years, beginning with the racial inequalities during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s (Banks, 1975, 1995a, 2006; Bell Jr., 1980; Khan, 2008). Activists within this movement wanted to reform the school curriculum so that the "experiences, histories, cultures, and perspectives" of African Americans and other ethnic groups had connections and relevance to their lives (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2010, p. 6). That is, African American students were provided with a curriculum that was developed for a White student population. Although multicultural education was derived from the social protests of the 1960s and 1970s, it has become a nationwide movement existing in schools (Banks, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Lipman, 2004; Yosso, 2006).

Achieving the inclusion of multiculturalism within the public education system requires a focus on diverse student populations with distinct backgrounds (Green-Gibson & Collett, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Lipman, 2004; Shockley, 2007; Yosso, 2006). According to Shockley (2007), the American education system continues to fail to address the educational and cultural needs of African American students. This has resulted in major behavioral, social, and academic problems (Cholewa & West-Olatunji, 2008; Shockley, 2007).

Multicultural education includes an understanding of the impact of factors — such as the social, political, economic, academic, and historical constructs of ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area — on student achievement (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 200, p.87). In a broader sense, multicultural education is described as "an idea stating that all students, regardless of the groups to which they belong, such as those related to gender, ethnicity, race, culture, social class, religion or exceptionality, should experience educational equality in the schools" (Banks, 1993, p. 25). This study adopts Banks' description and definition of multicultural education.

In addition to defining multicultural education, research must also consider the inequalities in education and the changes necessary to create equitable education for all students (Schellen & King, 2014; Shockley, 2007). For example, Grant and Sleeter (2010) conducted a study that grouped teacher perspectives into five approaches to multicultural education: 1) teaching the exceptional and culturally different, 2) human relations, 3) single group studies, 4) multicultural education, and 5) education that is multicultural and social constructivists. Each of the five areas emphasize a different approach to transform a school's program and/or curriculum so as to reflect diversity and establish equality (Lipman, 2004; Schellen & King, 2014; Shockley, 2007; Yosso, 2006). Despite research over the years, many schools still have not been able to provide students with culturally relevant education (Green-Gibson & Collett, 2014).

Multicultural education must be broadly conceptualized using five dimensions: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure (Banks, 1993b, 1993c, 1994b). Such education needs to consider that it requires school-wide efforts to work towards increasing educational equality for all students. Banks (2009) notes that the school is a social system, and as much, must integrate a

multicultural school environment, so that efforts to increase parental involvement must be part of the system of the school and not a simple "add-on."

Parents from various cultures may feel that they must assimilate to the school's norms. The historic perspective of America that continues even today is that of a "melting pot" in which all cultures come together to be melted down; however, De-Marrais and LeCompte (1999) indicate that a stew pot or salad bowl would be a more appropriate analogy. That is, the metaphor of a "melting pot" can appear to suggest that all recent immigrants "melt into" or adapt to the existing culture. In contrast, the image of a stew pot or salad bowl implies that diverse cultural demographics exist alongside others, thus enhancing societies across America (De-Marrais & LeCompte, 1999; Green-Gibson & Collett, 2014; Skerrett, 2008).

Decades have passed and the concept of multiculturalism for African American students continues to be a struggle for implementation in schools, with high school dropout rates for such American students continuing to be problematic (Green-Gibson & Collett, 2014; Skerrett, 2008; Yosso, 2006). Ladson-Billings (1994) believes that educators should complement the school curriculum by incorporating the African American culture so that students are able to connect to the content and graduate with a sense of sociopolitical awareness, as well as cultural knowledge about themselves. For example, recognizing the need and providing a culturally relevant curriculum that weaves together the diverse tapestry of the United States and its history, including African American and Latinx cultures, to name a few, requires a school-wide commitment. School leaders, teachers, and staff must evaluate their school's methods to provide the necessary academic content with the multicultural needs of African American students and other ethnic minorities (Banks, 2009; Green-Gibson & Collett, 2014).

Multicultural education in schools should include all students, regardless of race, gender, culture, language, socio-economic status, religion, or exceptionality; they should be able to receive equitable and equal educational opportunities for their parents as well (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2010). Also, a major goal of multicultural education is to help all students develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to interact and work within their own microcultures, the U.S. macroculture, and the global community (Banks, 2009; Banks & McGee-Banks, 2010). As a result, any reforms focusing on parental involvement should be open to all those who have children in the school.

While most of the research on multicultural education focuses on the needs of African American students, schools serving Latinx populations must also consider these students as well, because their needs are different from those of both African American children and affluent monolingual English-speaking students. Moreover, Latinx students may require additional support due to language barriers, such as lack of English-speaking fluency given that their parents may speak to them mostly in Spanish at home (Reyes & Azuara, 2008; Smokowski, Rose & Bacallao, 2008; Yosso, 2006). This concept indicates distinct obstacles for English Learners (ELs), especially when the curriculum is not conducive for their various academic levels (Reyes & Azuara, 2008; Smokowski, Rose & Bacallao, 2008; Yosso, 2006).

Summary Culture and Multicultural Education

Culture plays a crucial role in schools, and according to Banks (2009), it is important for all members of school staff to examine the school's culture and organization so that they can take part in restructuring and improving it. When a school's culture places an emphasis on multiculturalism, it can empower Spanish-speaking parents. In addition, teachers need to reflect on and reevaluate their teaching styles, and use a variety of approaches to better instruct students

and improve communication with parents from various cultures (Banks, 2009; Banks & McGee-Banks, 2010; Nieto, 2007; Reyes & Azuara, 2008; Smokowski, Rose & Bacallao, 2008;).

Understanding the culture of the school as well as diverse families, such as Spanish-speaking parents, can be a key component to increase student academic achievement (Banks, 2009). Thus, in order to enhance the education of Latinx children, it is important to build relationships with parents that further their efforts to help their children to be successful academically. That is, parents may develop a better understanding of the culture and content of teaching and learning within the school by participating in a family literacy program, such as a book club, in which they apply some of the same tools teachers use to teach texts their own children will read. Such emersion in one part of the school's curriculum may empower them not only develop and deepen their own literacy development, but also consider how they can support their children at home.

Funds of Knowledge

As educators try to bridge school and home cultures, it is important that they not view the home context as one that is "lacking" particular values, knowledge, or practices (Bishop, 2001; Gee, 1996; González, 1995; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Irvine & York, 1993; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). Gee (1996) reported that research findings indicate that teachers engage in deficit theorizing. That is, if students are struggling in school, teachers may conclude that the home culture is lacking in particular literacy skills or parental support. Such conclusions are often reached because educators have not assumed the responsibility to understand home values and teachings. Further, Hogg (2011) proposed that deficit theorizing is the notion that poor student achievement is unrelated to schooling. This perspective often faults the home culture for student underachievement, blaming parents because of the home

environment (Bishop, 2001; González, 1995; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Irvine & York, 1993; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992).

The term "Funds of Knowledge" stems from anthropological research in Latinx households and has been defined in different ways by scholars. For example, the term can represent the cultural ways of community members, such as collective cultural knowledge of a community. It also conceptualizes dynamic aspects of cultures without stereotyping communities that are often silenced by educational policies and practices (Moll et al., 1992). Further, Funds of Knowledge can be described as the essential cultural practices and bodies of knowledge that are embedded in the daily practices and routines of families (Moll et al., 1992). In addition, other researchers (Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, & Collazo, 2004) also described four of its component categories: family, community, popular culture, and peer group. For the purpose of this study, Funds of Knowledge will be defined as "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2001, p. 133-134). This definition stresses cultural knowledge, from both home and school, as well as school teachings related to essential skills.

When schools understand the research related to of Funds of Knowledge, diverse students can be provided with equitable and equal educational opportunities. While some dedicated teachers may understand their students' perceived constraints, unfortunately, this deficit theorizing mindset ultimately leads to expectation and acceptance of low academic achievement (Au, 1980; Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, 2006; Hogg, 2011; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Delpit (1995) highlights that administrators and teachers must recognize that they themselves are cultural beings, as are all individuals. For example, children from both working-class and

middle-class backgrounds should have access to language-rich environments (Heath, 1983).

However, teachers tend to identify and draw on knowledge and experiences of White middle-

class children much more frequently (Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, 2006; Hogg, 2011; Moll et

al., 2005). This is why many low-income status ethnic minority families are at a disadvantage;

there is an essential lack of orientation between ethnic minority families' own Funds of

Knowledge and those of the teacher (Moll et al., 2001; Rosebery, McIntyre, & Gonzalez, 2001;

Velez-Ibanez & Greenberg, 1992).

When teachers shed their role as educator and expert and take on a new role as learner,

they can come to know their students and their families in new and distinct ways (Moll et al.,

1992). With this new knowledge, they can begin to see and understand that the households of

their students contain rich cultural and cognitive resources (Moll et al., 1992; Gonzalez, et al.,

2005). These resources can and should be used in their classroom to provide culturally

responsive and meaningful lessons. Information that teachers learn about their students in this

process is considered the student's Funds of Knowledge (Moll et al., 1992; Gonzalez, et al.,

2005). In turn, this allows the teacher to access students' prior knowledge, and thus be able to

provide a different instructional approach for deeper meaningful learning. Since teachers may

not identify the relevant knowledge students bring to school, encouraging parents to become

more familiar with the curriculum can help them interact with their children regarding

curriculum (Au, 1980; Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, 2006; Moll et al., 1992; Gonzalez, et al.,

2005).

Through life experiences, Funds of Knowledge can be utilized to enhance the schooling

experience of ethnic minority children. Students will scaffold their acquisition of new

knowledge by means of apprenticeship into meaningful and culturally relevant schooling

experiences (Hogg, 2011; Gonzalez, et al., 2005). Moll and Greenberg's (1990) case studies

with 100 observations of Mexican households found that children in 25 households learn at home

by watching, questioning, and taking on tasks, thus actively directing their own learning. Funds

of Knowledge are a considerable diverse resource for ethnic minority students and their

communities to connect theory into practice for the achievement of culturally responsive

pedagogy (Gonzalez, et al., 2005; Hogg, 2011; Nieto, 2007).

 Teacher assumptions about the parenting practices of minority groups appear to be

difficult to overcome and can be a harsh dilemma for educators to fathom (Gonzalez, et al.,

2005; Hogg, 2011; Nieto, 2007). According to Hogg (2011), what are often considered as

student or home deficiencies by teachers are related to inadequate home literacy practices,

facilitated with the English language, motivation, and parental support. Such a criticism of the

home practices of parents is based on the perspective of middle-class White parents who have

access to books and can read with their children, speak standard English, and know school

expectations. They also know how to encourage their children to do well in school and can

support them with homework assistance and/or arranging to meet with teachers to discuss their

child's progress. These actions are based on both access and social class and, in some instances,

are culturally-based and demonstrate the values of middle-class families (Hart & Risley, 1995;

Hart & Risley, 1999; Heath, 1983; Hog, 2011). Thus, blaming minority parents for a child's lack

of achievement stems from a misconception about the parents' commitment to their children

(Heath, 1983; Hog, 2011; Moll et al., 1992; Gonzalez, et al., 2005).

 American anthropologist Oscar Lewis's book *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the*

Culture of Poverty –San Juan and New York (1966a) describes how low socio-economic or poor

Puerto Rican communities struggle to survive and concluded that personal empowerment is

unattainable for these groups. Recent immigrants and those for whom English is a second

language are often part of these communities and so their goals are often associated with survival

in a new country. These goals do include helping their children get a good education, but they

may define their role as "hands off" because they trust that the teachers know better about their

children's education (Lewis, 1966b). Further, there are also those parents who want to become

actively involved with the school, but may not know how. This often means that low-income

Latinx parents experience fewer parent programs that offer opportunities, and they may feel

unfamiliar with school practices, or don't know enough about American school expectations to

help their children at home (Reyes & Azuara, 2008; Smokowski et al., 2008).

In addition to helping parents understand educational expectations, educators can benefit

from listening to parents and trying to understand how the backgrounds of low-income Latinx

parents can inform educational practices that may be more effective with this population of

students (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Reyes & Azuara, 2008; Smokowski et al., 2008).

The Funds of Knowledge that parents bring to school meetings can provide deeper insights into

how teachers can provide a better support system, by listening and responding to the specific

needs of parents. Further, by listening to parents, teachers are better able to understand how

parents may contribute to the school (Antrop-Gonzalez & De Jesus, 2006; González et al., 2005;

Moll & Greenberg, 1991; Reyes & Azuara, 2008). For example, many parents who know the

Spanish language can share their cultural traditions and/or customs related to their background.

This can provide valuable rich parent-student information and can assist teachers, specifically

bilingual teachers by bringing their family's background knowledge, thus playing a larger role in

their child's education. Moreover, school-home connections not only enhance student learning,

but also expands the teachers' understanding of Latinx communities, supports parents who want

to help their children, and develops their own understanding of the culture in the United States

(González et al., 2005; Moll & Greenberg, 1991).

Funds of Knowledge offers a new conceptual framework for informing effective practice

for diverse students (Hogg, 2011). It is centered on the principle that the best way to learn about

lives and backgrounds is through a focus on households' everyday practices, and by learning

"what people do and what they say about what they do" (González et al., 2005, p. 40). The

strength of this approach lies in its ability to identify what is, rather than what is not, and

therefore shifts focus to engaging with individuals rather than making assumptions and

propagating stereotypes (Hogg, 2011). Some argue that by starting with the familiar, teachers

can develop long-term educational possibilities for students (Gonzalez, 1995). With a deeper

and more diverse knowledge of students, teachers can draw on the experiences and priorities of

parents to validate their home knowledge and life values, thus enabling teachers and parents to

scaffold student learning from the familiar (Hogg, 2011). By understanding the value that

parents can bring to their school, the school itself is able to provide meaningful learning

opportunities. These learning experiences can benefit both the parents, their children, and the

school.

Summary Funds of Knowledge

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Latinx Culture

Awareness of cultural differences among Latinx families is another critical factor impacting students. Family members may be recent immigrants or second-generation Latinx, and there may be various Latinx cultures within a school's population (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006). Ortiz and Ordoñez-Jasis (2005) indicate there is research providing conceptual frameworks attempting to explain the historical, sociological, and ideological aspects of the "Latinx educational experience." As previously mentioned in the key terms section of this dissertation, the term *Latino* is often used interchangeably with the term *Hispanic*, which was introduced into the English language and into the 1970 census by the U.S. government (Rodriguez, 2000). Raquel Reichard indicates how people have resisted this linguistic male dominance by replacing the final "o" in the word with "o/a" or "@" (Reichard, 2015; Reichard, 2017). The term *Latinx* is a Spanish-language term that has increased in usage since the introduction of the term Hispanic (Rodriguez, 2000). Researchers face a challenge of describing subgroups of Latinx due to its wide diversity (Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005). For the purpose of this research study, the term *Latinx*, a variant of *Latino*, will be used throughout this manuscript, as it both refers to "people generally related to Latin American origin or ancestry" (Jasis, 2000, p. 22), and is more inclusive than the use of *Latino*. This description will not only assist in generalizing Spanish-

speaking parents representing their local school communities, but also reminds the reader of the major population served by the school for this research.

Challenges for Latinx Parents

Latinx parents want their children to do well in school, and according to Orozco (2008), they are in search of a better life and opportunities for their children than what they have experienced in their native countries. Many Latinx parents may have arrived in the United States with limited formal education and may find that their child's school has limited resources to provide academic support (Orozco, 2008). Latinx parents can benefit from helpful communication from their school so that a positive rapport is established (Auerbach & Collier, 2012; Orozco, 2008; Reyes & Azuara, 2008). This can provide a hospitable understanding between the school and the parents, thus establishing discourse opportunities between both parties.

Communication between parents and school is can encourage parent involvement (Hogg, 2011; Moll et al., 1992; Reyes & Azuara, 2008). To be effective, it requires teachers and administrators to reach out to parents not just as consequence of a student's negative behavior, but also to open the lines of communication to encourage positive school behavior and learning. According to Auerbach and Collier (2012), schools typically do not develop comprehensive parent programs to address achievement. Further, research has not determined which parent involvement strategies are most effective (Epstein, Sanders, & Simon, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2011). In addition, many parent activities are simply social events disconnected from learning or formal occasions in which parents and educators encounter one another as "polite strangers" (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007). All these factors reinforce the need for schools to establish not only effective

lines of communication with Latinx parents, but also opportunities to learn the expectations teachers hold for their children.

Another challenge that Latinx parents may face is the stigmatization that some school districts may have on Latinx students' due to their low achievement and high dropout rates. (Epstein, 2001; KewalRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007; KewalRamani, Fox, & Aud, 2010; Gollnick & Chinn, 2013; Jimenez & Garcia, 1996; Jimenez, 1997). A report conducted by The Pew Hispanic Center (Lopez, 2009), which was based on a bilingual telephone survey interviews that were conducted from August 5 to September 16, 2009 of a nationally representative sample of 2,012 Latinx participants ages 16 and older, with an oversample of 1,240 young Latinx participants ages 16 to 25, indicated the following:

Latinx youths (ages 16 and older)

- Parents not playing an active role in helping their children succeed in school

- The different cultural backgrounds of Hispanic students and their teachers

- Limited English skills of Hispanic students

- Students not working as hard as other students

This report provided at the national conference, which was held October 2009 at the Pew Hispanic Center in Washington, D.C. The results from the report appear to give a negative impression of Latinx culture and negligence of education. Teachers may also develop negative reaction and could also develop low expectations for Latinx students due lack of parent involvement (Moll, 2000; Moll, Velez-Ibanez, & Greenberg, 1989; Nieto, 2007). Moreover, research also indicates that schools view Latinx parents as unwilling to be part of school events, unknowledgeable of schooling procedures, and unsupportive of their child's academic

development, which lead teachers forming negative perceived notions and stereotypes of Latinx families (Bishop, 2001; Gonzalez, 1995; Irvine & York, 1993; Moll et al., 1992).

It is important to understand the possible reasons why the Pew Hispanic Report provided some negative results of Latinx families and their education. Hogg's literature review (2011) indicates that low student achievement occurs when there is a significant disconnect between home and the school. Hogg (2011) expresses how deficit theorizing of Latinx students and their family's affects their academic success due to the understanding of Funds of Knowledge. Teachers need to consider Funds of Knowledge within their instruction so that Latinx students can benefit from new opportunities for authentic culturally responsive pedagogy (Hogg, 2011; Nieto, 2007). For example, teachers clearly need to build their knowledge of students' Funds of Knowledge in order to support the learning of such diverse students (Hogg, 2008, 20011; Moll, 2000; Moll, Velez-Ibanez, & Greenberg, 1989). Teachers may not understand how their students have limited exposure to the English language, the limited parental support, and limited literacy practice may possibly result in low academic achievement. In addition, teachers may develop a deficit theorizing mindset, which is why they need to understand that deficit theorizing is the notion that poor student achievement is unrelated to schooling (Hogg, 2008, 20011; Moll, 2000; Moll, Velez-Ibanez, & Greenberg, 1989; Velez-Ibanez, 1988; Velez-Ibanez, & Greenberg, 1992).

Some researchers convey the possible belief of teachers' mindset possibly implying that Latinx familes don't care about their children's education (Moll, 2000; Moll, Velez-Ibanez, & Greenberg, 1989; Nieto, 2007). This is why effective communication between parents and teachers can help make the necessary changes to understand the students' prior knowledge, thus having a cultural awareness (Hogg, 2008, 20011; Moll, 2000; Moll, Velez-Ibanez, & Greenberg,

1989; Velez-Ibanez, 1988; Velez-Ibanez, & Greenberg, 1992). Effective communication on a regular basis can translate to stronger educational instruction, which may provide positive academic achievement and could slowly do away with the notion that Latinx parents do not care about their children's education.

School-parent communication can lead to a better understanding of student expectations and encourage parents to have a voice to advocate for their children's education. Through reflective social dialogue, parents can develop confidence to take part of the school community, thus leading to parental critical thinking, analysis of group dialogue for social actions, and creating parent empowerment (Mayo, 2007; Freire, 1970; Nieto, 2007). Freire's (1970) theory of critical pedagogy explained the necessity to fully understand students and learn about their background experiences, as well as have critical dialogue about it (Lyons, 2001). Parent engagement and its connection to their children's success in the school may vary depending on their individual needs.

Low Income. It is evident that parents, regardless of language, speak to their children for various purposes and use different levels of communication depending on a given circumstance, such as informal family discussions, formal social gatherings, and one to one conversations (Saracho, 2007). Although English-learning Latinx parents may be limited in expressing themselves in English the way they would in Spanish, it is important to consider how they communicate and the word choice used during communication. For example, a low-income Spanish-speaking Latinx parent may communicate differently than an affluent professional working-class Spanish-speaking Latinx parent, thus having different levels of vocabulary development in their native Spanish language. In addition, schools having a low-income Latinx population may encounter students academically struggling and possibly falling behind due to

their limited English vocabulary/word usage compared to native English-speaking students (Cummins, 1981; Garcia, & Jensen, 2010; Saracho, 2007; Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006). Latinx parents of ELs need to receive additional language and literacy resources so that they can try to develop the adequate English grade level. Not all families are the same, and children may have differences within their language backgrounds based on their family upbringing and social environment; therefore, social status may play a role that affects students' academic achievement (Cummins, 1981; Garcia, & Jensen, 2010; Hart & Risley, 2003).

Hart and Risley's (2003) groundbreaking research study indicated significant differences in word experiences between professional, working-class, and low-income families. Hart and Risley recruited 42 families to participate in this study which consisted of 13 high-income families, 10 families of middle socio-economic status, 13 of low socio-economic status, and six families who were on welfare (Hart & Risley, 2003). It is important to note that Hart and Risley's (2003) research shows that low-income children understood and spoke 616 words per hour compared to 1,251 words per hour of children from working-class parents; a 635-word gap between both groups. In addition, children of professional working-class parents had a substantial increase of word experience to 2,153 words per hour and when compared to low-income students, the word gap is very much widened by a difference 1,537 words (Hart & Risley, 2003). Moreover, these researchers stated that by the age of four, average low-income children might have 13 million fewer words accumulated through life experiences than children in average working-class families. This study shows an immense word gap between affluent, working, and low-income/homeless families due to social economic status (SES). Schools need to acknowledge that not all parents may have the same educational and socio-economic backgrounds, and work to accommodate all parents during school-related functions. For

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example, Latinx parents may have the similar limitations in terms of vocabulary as their children, hampering their ability to support learning at home.

School – Parent Partnerships

As previously mentioned, the increase in Latinx demographics indicates that schools must provide sufficient parent involvement opportunities that spark their interests, so that parents are able to advocate for their children. Also, parents can be offered schooling opportunities to build on to their background knowledge and achieve personal goals. Parental involvement has been a central component in many schools nationwide (Sanders, 2008; Senechal & Laura 2008), and policy-makers continue to stress the need for parental involvement with aims of improving academic performance of low-income children (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 (No Child Left Behind, 2002) was a landmark in education reform designed to improve student achievement and change the culture of America's schools from 2002–2015. It held schools accountable for student achievement as well as affected every public school in the United States (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 Public Law, 2002). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2003), No Child Left Behind (NCLB) ensured that parents have important information about their child's school and communication about their child's academic performance, regardless of their background. In addition, schools were to provide all parents important academic information in order to help their child by attending parent-teacher meetings to address academic problems and volunteering opportunities (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Although NCLB has recently been replaced by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) it remains very much the same, but with some minor changes. A change that relates to this study pertains to partnerships with parents and school staff by requiring the development of evidence-based strategies for parents and students for school

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improvement (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). At the time of this study, ESSA was law and under ESSA schools can further implement more parent programs that would connect with the academic enrichment of their child's learning. When schools decide which parent programs are beneficial, parents should have a voice with the selection. By providing parent choice in the selection of programs, it could foster a stronger relationship, so as to encourage and/or attract parents in attending school functions.

There is research that indicates student achievement is higher for children of parents that are more involved in their school than for children whose families are less involved families (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2005). By connecting home and school, parent involvement can have the potential to influence their child's academic achievement in positive ways (Dearing et al., 2006). Parent involvement demonstrates a vested interest, benefits student-teacher relationships through parent communication, and promotes teachers' positive attitudes toward the student (Jeynes, 2003, 2005). In addition, it affects the child and the child's teacher(s) by forming an ongoing communicative triad that mainly influences the child's feelings about school (Dearing et al., 2006). Moreover, parental involvement includes advocating for their child, which can directly affect his/her social and emotional welfare, as well as their academic success. By providing an ongoing forum in which parents engage with personnel, school personnel can better understand both the needs and strengths the students bring to the school. Further, providing parents with opportunities to interact with the curriculum may empower them in their efforts to help their children.

Schools with families of low socioeconomic backgrounds may have other priorities for their children as noted by Khan & Malik (1999) who stated that in families with low socioeconomic status, the majority of whom are illiterate, for the most part, do not have an

understanding of the requirements of their children's education. This makes it difficult for parents to become involved with their child's education, since the school may not know how to approach or assist the parents. According to Okpala, Okpala, and Smith (2001) they support the view that economic circumstances are significantly correlated with academic achievement. Thus, several factors of importance in developing effective parental support systems include ethnicity, family income, home environment, and the parents' awareness of the importance of education (Khan & Malik (1999). Gonzalez-Pienda, Nunez, Gonzalez-Pumariega, Alvarez, Roces, and Garcia (2002) found that parental support is likely to decrease as children move from primary to middle school and then to high school grades. During the developmental academic years, parents need to play a role and become active participants in their child's school. However, the school may not understand the interactions parents and their children have and how these may be influenced by socioeconomic and cultural factors. Generally, low-income parents are not directly involved in the teaching-learning activities in school, since their priorities are to provide the financial and other material support for their children (Gonzalez-Pienda et al., 2002).

Special Needs Family Considerations. Lack of parental involvement affects all students; for example, children with special needs have experienced unequal academic and social opportunities. According to Jimenez and Graf (2008), students with disabilities should be granted access and taught in general education classroom settings, and in other educational activities as well. These opportunities include eating lunch with their grade level peers, attending assemblies, and participating in various subject areas, i.e. art, music, physical education, etc. These researchers study from Jimenez and Graf (2008), indicated that schools did not make the necessary efforts to communicate with parents and involve them in curriculum

decision-making in order to include their special needs child in the least restrictive environment opportunities. It is important to understand that the parent-school relationship for families of students with special needs are subject to current protective laws under the tenets of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 (Newman, Cameto, and Hernandez, 2005).

According to Gafoor (2010**),** effective and inclusive schools must recognize and respond to student needs by involving their parents. School and parent collaboration is necessary for the inclusion of students with special needs in the entire schooling experience. Collaboration between schools and parents will assists general education students and school staff to develop awareness and respect for others when special needs students are included in school-wide functions (Hernandez, Harry, Newman, & Cameto, 2008). Thus, school-parent dialogue with school special needs programs continues to be a crucial issue for parents and plays a significant role with their child's academic and social/emotional needs.

School Expectations and Perceptions. Some schools may expect Spanish-speaking Latinx parents to conform to traditional educational practices when attempting to engage them in activities that are not necessarily what the parents may view as important. Although schools are provided with some financial support from federal and state policies in order to provide parent programs, they often fail to include input from parents as to what types of programs they would like to receive (Moll et al., 1992). According to Dearing, Kreider, and Weiss (2008), Latinx parental involvement is not at the levels that schools would like them to be, since this group is reported to have low levels of school participation. Moreover, schools experiencing a shift in the racial makeup of their student and community populations to one that is predominately Latinx may experience differences in traditional parental involvement (Valencia & Black, 2002) and

ignore research that can support their efforts in conceptualizing and developing meaningful programs to spur parent involvement among Mexican parents (Gaytan, 2014; López, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Valdez, 1996). In sum, schools expecting parents to understand or conform to traditional type of parental programs will have very limited parental involvement.

Research has linked parental involvement with positive academic outcomes for all students (López, et al., 2001; Turney & Kao, 2009). Communication in both English and Spanish is key when trying to implement parent programs as is valuing what parents are able to bring to the school is a key factor. According to Valdes (1996; as cited in Quiocho and Daoud, 2006), parents often misunderstood their role in their children's school due to lack of clarity in what the school defines as parental involvement.

No Child Left Behind. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, which proposed to close the achievement gaps between 2002 and 2015, provided several federal funds for educational programs (No Child Left Behind, 2001). Part of these federal funds were designated to schools to fund for the development and implementation of parent education programs. Schools form an NCLB committee and the administration can decide how to use these funds, provided that the school district approves.

No Child Left Behind also required states and school districts to provide parents with detailed report cards at school and district levels and informing them which schools are succeeding (No Child Left Behind, 2001; No Child Left Behind Action Brief, 2004). These report cards contained general student achievement data broken out by race, ethnicity, gender, English language proficiency, migrant status, disability status and low-income status (No Child Left Behind, 2001; No Child Left Behind Action Brief, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2003). In addition, NCLB provided parents important, timely information about their children,

such as whether they were performing well, and included all children, regardless of their background (No Child Left Behind, 2001; No Child Left Behind Action Brief, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2004). NCLB aimed to specifically assist parents in various ways, including parent involvement, providing Rules for Parent Involvement (2007) specifically for districts as follows:

- Write parent-involvement policies that are developed jointly with parents;

- Hold an annual meeting to explain parents' rights to be involved;

- Write school-improvement plans that include strategies for parent involvement;

- Spend around 1% of their money on engaging families;

- Inform parents, in an understandable language, about the progress of their children and what they can do to help;

- Distribute an annual report card on the performance of schools;

- Inform parents if a school is low-performing and provide options for transferring to a better-performing school and obtaining free tutoring the following year; and

- Spread information about effective parent-involvement practices and help schools with lagging parent-involvement programs.

These components were meant to develop strong parent-school partnerships and to complement other school committees, such as a bilingual advisory committee (BAC) and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) committee that might already be in place to involve are in place to involve parents.

The U.S. Department of Education highlighted four pillars within NCLB: 1) stronger accountability for results, 2) more freedom for states and communities, 3) proven education methods, and 4) more choices for parents (No Child Left Behind, 2001; No Child Left Behind

Action Brief, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2004). With the pillar that emphasized

additional choices for parents, the Department of Education highlighted the importance of

ongoing interactions between schools and homes. This pillar expressed the need for schools to

include parents in the development of programs so they could connect to parent-student learning

experiences. The NCLB Rules for Parent Involvement (2007), outlined that parent involvement

is both a commitment and a priority for districts and school administration of a school. When

parents believe that their actions can make a difference, they are more likely to be involved, even

if there are differences among parents. For example, NCLB (2007) noted that middle-class

parents are generally more actively involved at school, whereas working class and low-income

parents are more likely to view school and home as separate and distinct areas with educators in

charge at school. Yet, the NCLB Rules for Parent Involvement (2007) called for both groups to

be offered opportunities to be involved.

Although NCLB has been replaced by ESSA in December 2010, many of the NCLB

tenants around parent engagement are still in place, however ESSA provides more opportunities

for parent and school partnerships (Dahlin, 2017; Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). ESSA

adds a more comprehensive approach to family engagement, since it emphasizes the importance

of schools providing parents more educational opportunities that can contribute to their child's

academic achievement (Dahlin, 2017; Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). For example, ESSA

also specifies more ways Title I funding can be used to support parent engagement by providing

additional professional development, various supporting programs and activities that are selected

with specific parent input, and collaborating with community-based organizations (Dahlin, 2017;

Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). In addition, ESSA provides more funding to expand family

engagement opportunities in other areas such as the migrant education program (Title I Part C),

English learners (Title III), and children with disabilities, which why states play a larger role in holding its schools accountable (Dahlin, 2017; Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015; U.S. Department, 2015).

Although this study took place fall of 2016 when ESSA was law, the significance of NCLB is worth exploring since it brought forth necessary revisions to parent engagement opportunities among other educational areas. Still, ESSA tries to maintain and expand key areas of NCLB, while fixing what was widely perceived as a one-size-fits-all approach, thus making difficult for schools consider the specific needs of parents (Miller, 2015). Even though ESSA is fairly new to completely measure its effectiveness, an area that is relevant to this study, relates to how ESSA can provide more parent engagement opportunities; more than its last predecessor.

Parent Involvement, Engagement, and Family Literacy

Researchers Civil, Bratton, and Quintos, (2005) conducted a study of the kinds of practices Latinx parents use to support their children's learning of mathematics, as well as focusing on their resourcefulness even though they had different learning experiences and in some cases encountered a language barrier. This specific study provided four specific concepts for schools to consider when establishing Latinx parent educational program opportunities and a proactive partnership with parents. First, schools should strive to find alternative ways of involving Latinx parents in order to reflect a purposeful and meaningful involvement, with consideration given to minority parenting styles and linguistic socialization. Second, it is also essential to consider different components or visions to support engaging parental involvement opportunities so that learning from them will transfer to the education of their children. These researchers gave an example of one type of school-parent involvement where parents focused on motivating their children for high achievement, while also having the opportunities to train other

parents. Here they noted that schools must consider parents as learners who may require some

assistance in understanding certain schooling procedures or academic areas that their children

encounter. Finally, the study indicated that schools must clearly value parents as leaders who

desire the best for their children, including educational experiences (Civil et al., 2005).

According to Epstein (2001), parent involvement can be identified as taking six forms:

communication, parenting, student learning, volunteering, school decision-making and advocacy,

and collaborating with the community. In fact, the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

(2000), a reputable organization in many schools, has adopted Epstein's six types of parental

involvement. In part, this is because expectations are explicitly described in each type of

involvement which assists schools as they can form working partnerships between teachers and

parents, both with the equal responsibility of helping their students (Epstein, 2001; National

Parent Teacher Association, 2000).

Involving parents in their child's education has been linked to increased academic

achievement through grades and test scores (Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2005). This relationship

has been demonstrated across diverse ethnic and cultural groups (Jeynes, 2005), and is stronger

for ethnic minority groups, such as African American and Latinx students, than for White

students (Hill, Castellino, Lansford, Nowlin, Dodge, Bates, & Pettit, 2004; Hill & Taylor, 2004).

According to Sy, Rowley, and Schulenberg, (2007), Caucasian parents tend to be more involved

in school activities such as volunteering, school events, parent-teacher conferences, and open-

houses than ethnic minority parents. In addition, Lee and Bowen (2006) state that due to these

factors, ethnically diverse groups generally are behind Caucasian students in terms of academic

achievement. Lack of parental involvement can help to contribute to low academic achievement

among diverse students; therefore, engaging parents in educational experiences may empower them to become more involved in their child's academic learning.

It is unfair to assume that all parents of a given school should follow the same form and type of parental involvement. There are several problematic issues affecting the area of school and parental participation (Comer, 1991; Epstein 2001; Olivos, Jiménez-Castellanos, & Ochoa, 2011). Some problems may occur as a result of the school's control and power to define parental involvement without really considering all parent groups (Jordan, Orozco, & Averett, 2001; Olivos, et al., 2011). It is key to understand that all forms of parental involvement are not the same (Olivos, et al., 2011), given that there are parental involvement models that may ignore the wide variety of school demographics, especially in diverse urban communities. The dilemma of understanding parental involvement, especially in diverse groups is ongoing.

It is critical that parent involvement for ethnic minority groups aim for higher student academic achievement. Yet, research that indicates that teachers and school leaders report a lack of parent involvement in African Americans and Latinx parent involvement due to culturally, linguistically, and economically factors, which is one reason that the achievement gap has not closed (Guerra & Nelson, 2013; Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007; Zarate, 2007). However, there is also research that contradicts this notion that parents do not want to be involved in their child's school. For example, several studies point out that Latinx parents have higher academic expectations for their children than Caucasian parents (Rice, 2003; Ryan, Casas, Kelly-Vance, Ryalls, & Nero, 2010). For example, Ryan, Casas, Kelly-Vance, Ryalls, & Nero, (2010) examined ethnicity and cultural orientation as predictors of parents' views of and involvement in children's education. These researchers had parents complete a questionnaire that assessed Latinx and White American cultural orientations, importance of children's academic and

social success, and self- and significant other involvement in children's education. Results indicated that Latinx (and other ethnic minority) parents valued academic and social success equally and more strongly than did Whites and that Whites valued social success more strongly than academic success (Ryan et al., 2010).

Parental Involvement. Parental involvement can take form in different ways. It can have a positive outcome both academic and socially, when various forms of parental participation opportunities are offered (Nathans & Revelle, 2013). Schools can help by providing parents various school activities or functions relevant to their child's needs. However, as noted previously, diverse parent groups may have different definitions for what parental involvement entails (Nathans & Revelle, 2013). For example, Henderson and Mapp's (2002) research explored the possible factors and implications of schools and parents establishing a mutual understanding of what parental involvement means. One definition consists of "the participation of parents in regular, two-way meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities" (U. S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 3). Based on this definition, parent participation may include: reading to the student, checking homework, limiting television viewing, meeting with school staff to discuss a child's progress, voting in school board elections, advocating for better education, or simply asking a child about his or her day at school (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2009). The list of activities places full responsibility on the parent, with no reference to the role that school personnel can play in building bridges between school and home. Therefore, since every school has its own unique culture and families from various backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, and needs, parent involvement continues to be a multi-faceted, poorly-defined component of learning that presents a challenging task to implement.

As difficult as it may appear, positive relationships with their parents is crucial to ensure they feel closer to their child's school. Thus, clear communication between the schools and parents require an understanding of parents' cultural framework and attitudes toward learning (e.g., how it occurs, who is responsible for this process and how, etc.) (Joshi, Eberly, & Konzal, 2005; Nathans & Revelle, 2013). For example, teachers frequently lack sufficient background knowledge of families' cultures and do not know how to successfully "build bridges" to develop and maintain partnerships (Joshi et al., 2005). School's should support parents in their efforts to encourage a quality education for their children.

Joyce Epstein's (2001) research emphasizes the importance of developing partnerships between families, schools, and communities and developed a six-part typology of family involvement. The first type of involvement refers to the basic obligations of families, such as parenting skills, provision for the student's health and safety, and maintenance of home conditions that support learning and behavior throughout the student's school attendance (Epstein, 2001; Nathans & Revelle, 2013). The second type of involvement refers to the basic obligations of schools in providing consistent, clear communication back and forth with parents regarding school programs, and students' academic and social progress (Epstein, 2001; Nathans & Revelle, 2013). According to Epstein (2001), this is commonly done through multiple communication methods such as phone calls, home visits, parent-teacher conferences, and written communication through notes, emails, and/or newsletters. With the increased use of technology, schools now use text messages and websites to further ensure that parents receive information.

The third type of involvement connects parents and school in a more directed interaction (Nathans & Revelle, 2013) so that parents can assist teachers, administrators, and other students

in classrooms, as well as attend school events (Epstein, 2001; Nathans & Revelle, 2013). This type of involvement is traditionally the most well-known and is most frequently practiced by Caucasian parents (Epstein, 2001; Nathans & Revelle, 2013). The fourth type of involvement, termed Learning Activities at Home, requires that teachers to guide parents in monitoring and assisting and/or participating in learning activities at home that all connect to the classroom curriculum, such as homework classroom projects and technological educational tools (Epstein, 2001; Nathans & Revelle, 2013). The fifth type of involvement relates to parental input, decision-making, and advocacy (Nathans & Revelle, 2013), in that parents and community members participate in the process that shapes certain school functions and goals. By having a direct "voice" in school decisions through participation in groups like NCLB, BAC, or PTA, committees transform into advocacy groups with the objectives of improving the school (Epstein, 2001; Nathans & Revelle, 2013). The sixth type of involvement is labeled Collaboration and Exchange with Community Organizations (Epstein, 2001), and focuses on the role of the school in building partnerships with such community groups, namely, businesses, cultural organizations, and other groups that provide resources to enhance students' education and future academic and vocational success (Epstein, 2001; Nathans & Revelle, 2013).The knowledge of all six types of involvement enables administrators and school staff to become better equipped to develop skills to engage diverse families across multiple situations (Nathans & Revelle, 2013). At the same time, six different types of involvement can be overwhelming for any individual school staff to assume.

Many ethnically diverse families are involved in and supportive of their children's education in numerous ways (Nathans & Revelle, 2013). As Epstein's typology notes, Latinx parent involvement behaviors may differ from behaviors traditionally associated with parent

involvement. Yet Nathans and Revelle (2013) state that different does not mean absent, although Olivos et al. (2011) argue that from a parental view, Epstein's model does not emphasize supporting Latinx parents in their understanding of the school. According to these researchers, Latinx parents rarely question a school's authority, and makes the case that Epstein's framework primarily applies to a White middle-class parent population. This is because it lacks a reference or inclusion of the complex experiences that Latinx across generational statuses bring to schools (Olivos et al., 2011).

Parental Engagement. As noted, Epstein's model focuses on parental involvement through a triangular partnership between family, school, and community, and relies on mutual involvement to support student academic success (Olivos et al., 2011). Yet schools still hold significant power: "The significant power imbalances and relations that exist between the priorities of the school's and those of low-income communities, we call for parents to be 'engaged' with the schools and not simply involved or included" (Olivos et al., 2011, p.10). This quote demonstrates the importance of being involved in school activities, as well as being contributors through engagement to partnerships that the school and parents develop. Within Epstein's model, none of the specific categories expands on the notion of increasing parents' cultural knowledge of the U.S. educational system so as to be better able to help with their child's schooling. Therefore, research should explore ways schools can emphasize cultural knowledge to support not just their own students, but also their own staff. Throughout the study, the term "parent engagement" reflects the active, intrinsic, self-motivating of active parental participation (Olivos et al., 2011, p.10). However, for the purpose of this study, I use the term "text engagement" to answer the three questions that I have posed to answer within this study.

Text engagement places emphasis on literacy development as way to help support their children during reading.

According to Olivos et al. (2011), the school and parents should develop a sense of trust and an open relationship, with engagement taking the form of critical parent partners. It is key for schools to incorporate an active two-way communication, "building on to parent leadership skills, creating spaces of belongingness and awareness of how to navigate the school system and seeking to promote cultural, social, linguistic diversity and inclusion" (Olivos et al., 2011, p.10). This sense of trust plays a major factor in building parent trust that can lead to understanding how the school can provide them with support (Olmedo, 2009).

Olivos et al. (2011) compares Epstein's model to that Osterling and Garza's (2004), which demonstrates differences in regard to considerations needed for Latinx Spanish-speaking culture. The Osterling and Garza model incorporates the following components: parents as leaders, parents as collaborators, parents as teachers, parents as supporters, parents as parents, and parents as contributors to school. Here the focus of parental involvement shifts from White mainstream parents to Latinx and/or other diverse groups (Olivos et al., 2011). Its focus is centered on cultural areas necessary for schools that have large Latinx populations. This model provides a new vision of Latinx parent partnerships wherein parents become change agents while supporting their child and while being "students" themselves in terms of learning the academic curriculum.

Schools and teachers may not fully understand that parents do indeed want to participate in school functions, but the engagement opportunities provided may not have been requested or necessarily desired, resulting in a lack of engagement (Guerra & Valverde, 2007; Zarate, 2007; Olivos, et al., 2011). According to Henderson et al. (2007), parent involvement is an essential

aspect of making classrooms and schools more culturally responsive. In addition, schools should consider various forms of parental engagement that reflect the parents of other racial and ethnic backgrounds, including Latinx cultures so as to have strong parent involvement (Henderson et al., 2007; Valdés, 1996; Zarate, 2007).

Family Literacy.

The concept of family literacy can be defined as planned interactions between a parent and a child that assists children in developing school-like literacy practices. This concept is centered on the notion that higher academic achievement in literacy has a positive effect on overall academic performance (Auerbach, 1989; Briggs & Elkind, 1977; Clark, 1976; Chance, 2010; Dunn, 1981; DeBruin-Parecki & Krol-Sinclair, 2003; Morrow & Young, 1997).

In addition, family literacy can also be conceptualized in terms of initiatives, programs, or projects by schools, governmental, and nonprofit organizations, with initiatives viewed as "holding the key to eventual academic success of children who are identified as at risk for failure in U. S. schools" (Paratore, Melzi, & Krol-Sinclair, 1999, p. 1). Despite the best intentions for many of these organizations, Elsa Auerbach (1989) argues that many school-sponsored family literacy programs function under a new version of the "deficit hypothesis," which assumes that parents lack the skills to help their children with reading. Furthermore, she proposes a broader definition of family literacy than what normally underlies these programs, which includes and capitalizes on the family's social cultural practices and interactions, and focuses on its strengths. In addition, Paratore, Melzi, and Krol-Sinclair (1999) also regard family literacy programs "as interventions that interpret family differences as deprivation and as representative of a belief that children will succeed in schools," (p. 3) which means that many family literacy programs aim

solely to provide additional support for parents because they may not know how to, or even cannot accomplish this specific type of academic assistance for their children.

Although providing parents with the necessary information and tools to help their children succeed in school is important, it also just as important for schools to understand that all families incorporate some structure of language experiences and forms of literacy within their daily routines (Heath, 1983; Moll & Greenberg, 1991; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Teale, 1986). These family events are often different from those teachers are familiar with, especially if s/he is unfamiliar with the student's culture (DeBruin-Parecki & Krol-Sinclair, 2003; Heath, 1983; Morrow, & Young, 1997). Seminal research in the study of the home environment, which focused on children, their parents, and the family's cultural resources, began in the 1980s with ethnographic studies of culturally diverse families and communities (Heath, 1982, 1983; Li, 2006; Purcell-Gates, 1996; Taylor, 1993; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Teale, 1986). This body of research deepened understandings of specific features of daily routines of home environments that serve as domains for literacy learning and development such as, having family dinner, going shopping, attending religious services (places of worship), extended family gatherings, and vacations/local recreational family trips, just to name a few. In addition, these researchers noted that an acknowledgment of the importance of the family's culture is a critical component for the success of family literacy programs that has often been overlooked. This body of research recommends that family literacy programs complement their programs by including families' cultural background knowledge by valuing and respecting all parents' potential for school involvement.

Family literacy programs should include cultural background components in programming, such as ensuring that parents' native languages are reflected in resource materials

and books, as well as serve as the means of communication in all activities is critical for English Learners (ELs) (DeBruin-Parecki, & Krol-Sinclair, 2003; De Temple & Snow, 2003; Jiménez, Filippini, & Gerber, 2010; Moll, 2005; Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2008; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). In particular, Latinx ELs greatly benefit from native language components to family literacy programs to provide needed answers to possibly confusing, yet integral pieces to the program. The use of native languages can even motivate parents to actively participate in these programs (Cummins, 1986; Cummins, Brown, & Sayers, 2007; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Shanahan, Mulhern, & Rodriguez-Brown, 1995). In addition, family literacy programs created with a sociocultural emphasis can assist ELs as these promote the building and sharing of literacy experiences and cultural beliefs (DeBruin-Parecki, & Krol-Sinclair, 2003; Moll, 2005; Rodriguez-Brown, 2001). Technological advancements such as books on mobile devices, video of book reviews, on-line book English learning programs/resources, and a speeder process of filming movies based on books where subtitles can be utilized, also provide new opportunities to improve text engagement of Latinx families in family literacy programs because they support these families by offering more choices for families to select and utilize (DeBruin-Parecki, & Krol-Sinclair, 2003; Rodriguez-Brown, 2001).

According to Sharon Darling (2004), president and founder of the National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL), family literacy programs have changed over the last 20 years. One program that promotes national assistance in funding family literacy programs was developed by Barbara Bush, the wife of President George H. W. Bush, who was the First Lady of the United States from 1989 to 1993. The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy (2018) website states, "The home is the child's first school, the parent is the child's first teacher, and reading is the child's first subject," and this sentiment is the reason Mrs. Bush started the Barbara Bush

Foundation for Family Literacy. This organization promotes awareness of the importance of

family literacy by implementing nationwide family literacy grant programs to provide resources

for toddlers and preschoolers enrolled in the Foundation's programs. It also provides a student-

to-student mentorship program that pairs elementary students with high school students to take

part in a reading program.

Another federally-funded family literacy program initiated as part of the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) is Even Start, first authorized in 1988 (U.S.

Department of Education, 2014). A description of the program in *Guide* to *Quality: Even Start*

Family Literacy Program (2001) states, "Even Start services are comprehensive, and the

expectation is that all participants will actively and consistently participate in all program

components" (2001, p. 26). Even Start has four program components, namely, interactive literacy

activities between parents and their children, training for parents on how to be the primary

teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children, as well as adult

education and training for personal growth and economic self-sufficiency.

A literacy project specifically for Latinx families called Project FLAME (Family

Literacy: *Aprendiendo*, *Mejorando*, *Educando*) [Learning, Improving, Educating], provides a

framework where parents and their children create learning experiences in their home

environment with the goal of connecting home and school (Shanahan, Mulhern, & Rodriguez-

Brown, 1995). This program was designed to encourage Latinx parents to share literacy with

their children in their native language while parents and children are also learning English

(Shanahan, Mulhern, & Rodriguez-Brown, 1995). It also meets the cultural needs of their homes

and community, as well as school expectations for academic achievement. One of the highlights

of Project FLAME is the added component of parent English as a Second Language (ESL)

classes as this not only assists them develop English literacy, but also provides a forum for dialogue where parents feel safe to share their insights and questions, given that they serve as parent volunteers and as trainers/learners (Shanahan, Mulhern, & Rodriguez-Brown, 1995).

Summary: Family Literacy

As previously mentioned, family literacy is a term used to describe parents and children learning together through meaningful cultural experiences that link literacy to their daily home routines and communities (Heath, 1983; Moll & Greenberg, 1991; Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, 1988; Teale, 1986). Latinx families and their community members can greatly benefit from the incorporation of literacy at home and in their communities, which can also serve to build cultural knowledge through shared connections (DeBruin-Parecki, & Krol-Sinclair, 2003; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Shanahan, Mulhern, & Rodriguez-Brown, 1995). Even though family literacy can take place within the family's home environment, family literacy programs can also be developed by schools, libraries, and other local or national organizations. There are various types of family literacy programs, all of which provide educational support in the area of literacy and which can help parents and children learn and grow together.

Family literacy programs are implemented to address the literacy needs of families and communities while promoting parent-school involvement in their child's academic success (DeBruin-Parecki, & Krol-Sinclair, 2003; Paratore, 2001; Paratore, Melzi, & Krol-Sinclair, 1999). Programs with a sociocultural basis can assist ELs, by sharing their literacy experiences and cultural beliefs, which bring value and respect to all participants (DeBruin-Parecki & Krol-Sinclair, 2003; Moll, 2005; Rodriguez-Brown, 2001). Schools with large populations of Latinx ELs should try to acknowledge and make efforts to understand their students' ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds when providing family literacy programs. If schools include the necessary

language, instruction, and cultural components to their programs, parents will have more

engaging literacy learning experiences given that they feel respected, which can in turn expose

parents to new literacy knowledge which can be used to help their children. Through a family

literacy program, parents can become more involved with their children's reading classroom

instruction, as well as further develop positive school-parent partnerships.

Parent Book Clubs

Parent book club studies in elementary schools is an area that has limited research,

although book club programs are commonly known for high student text engagement and are

frequently part of a school's reading curriculum. Book clubs are also popular in the general

public as evidenced by Hall (2003) journal article titled *The "Oprahfication" of Literacy:*

Reading "Oprah's Book Club, which emphasized how talk-show host Oprah Winfrey promoted

literacy with "Oprah's Book Club," a book-discussion group that aired as part of the Oprah

Winfrey Show from 1996 through 2002. Book clubs bring students into a community of readers

and provide opportunities for personal response, encourages students to construct meaning with

others, and allows readers to question the text (Harker, 1987; Raphael & McMahon, 1994;

Rosenblatt, 1978). There are various types of book clubs, but for the purpose of this study, I will

focus on a past study known as the Book Club Project, which was a collaboration between

Raphael, McMahon, Goatley, Bentley, Boyd, Pardo, and Woodman (1992). According to

Raphael and McMahon (1994), this particular book club program involved four components:

reading, writing, whole class discussions, and instruction. It was also supported by student-led

discussions. Although some book clubs have a large number of participants, this book club

program consisted of three to five students in each book club and included students with mixed

abilities. This book club emphasized student active participation with evidence of oral discourse

throughout the process of analyzing the textbook. The Book Club Project demonstrated the importance of fusing reading with language arts as students were able to discuss and write, which further advanced their interpretation of the book (Raphael & McMahon, 1994). Also, it emphasized meaningful student thematic conversations based on the text. Due to its success, the Book Club Project is a seminal study for incorporating book clubs in elementary settings where it can take a similar format but with other components so as to accommodate the age differences.

 Following the Book Club Project's conceptual framework was another book club project titled Book Club Plus, which focused on the organization and design of the reading curriculum, peer-led interactive discussions, and writing about text (Raphael, Florio-Ruane, & George, 2001). Also, the Book Club Plus emphasized the concept that learning is independent; self-regulated readers must learn to routinely utilize skills and strategies at their instructional level (Raphael et al., 2001; Teale & Sulzby, 1987). Teachers participating in the Book Club Plus organized the instructional components with the implementation of three literacy thematic units, each of which could last from three to eight weeks and included structured unit themes, resources/texts, and related unit work (Raphael et al., 2001). According to Raphael et al. (2001), the goal of the Book Club Plus was student learning which was demonstrated by traditional comprehension tests and informal assessments, such as writing samples and other activities. Both the Book Club Project and the Book Club Plus frameworks provide a successful blueprint for teachers who wish to develop a classroom or school-wide book club, which can also expand in involving/including parents. A Latinx parent book club structured in a school setting, with texts of their choosing and read in Spanish and/or English to meet the parent language needs, can foster family reading practices at home.

Dail, McGee, and Edwards (2009) conducted a research study based on a book club called the Community Book Club which was an activity proposed as part of an existing early education program. The goal was to provide professional development for teachers and family literacy activities for parents which would meet the need for involvement in their children's education, namely, to increase their skills in reading (Dali et al., 2009). This club attempted to support family efforts in having their children receive exposure to language and literacy development (Dail et al., 2009). The Community Book Club was based on previous research on the impact of family literacy activities of inner-city African Americans from low socio-economic status on young children's overall education and, specifically, school literacy learning (Heath, 1983; Taylor, 1983; Taylor & Dorsey Gaines, 1988).

Although the goal of the Community Book Club study was focused on family literacy, it was faced with controversy (Paratore, 2001; Taylor, 1997). For example, Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005) criticized family literacy programs such as book clubs, because they tend to focus on school-like literacy practices, and instead, advocated for programs that recognize the value of the legitimate literacy practices that families utilize in their homes and communities (Dail et al., 2009). While such criticism acknowledges the potential limitations of a school-focused agenda, it ignores the need for parents in many racial and ethnic groups to understand and feel comfortable with the school curriculum through experiences that mirror those of their children. Without such experiences, they may not understand school expectations and may not be able to support their own children if they struggle with the school curriculum.

The Community Book Club aimed to connect the book club to the broader community, which is why the researches invited all community members to participate in the project (Dail et al., 2009). This found that book club participation can influence the literacy practices of a wide

range of community members, teachers, and extended family members during meetings (Dail et al., 2009). Results showed that participants began talking about books in a manner similar to school, due in part to the increased dialogue in the participants' supporting networks and because they often attended and discussed books with more depth and with extended family members (Dail et al., 2009). This research demonstrated that connections were made throughout the community, especially between teachers and parents. This book club was a clear example of how it can expand the participants' "Funds of Knowledge," since it demonstrated the ways that this particular community was able to develop the knowledge needed for themselves and/or for their home environment through literacy (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

A similar book club study connected to that of the Community Book Club was completed by Geraci (2003) who initiated a multicultural book club in a state prison to encourage culturally diverse inmates to interact together and drew on participants' "Funds of Knowledge." Book clubs have also been used for professional development of teachers (Flood & Lap, 1994; Kooy, 2003), and some have included both teachers and parents (Zaleski, 1999). As evidenced from this research, book clubs can provide a context where parents and teachers can engage in literacy practices that are common in reading classroom skills development.

A book club can also be viewed as a way to use literature and conversations to help adolescents deal with their family struggles and their quests for independence (Polleck, 2011). Some book clubs make such an impact that it joins the reader to their personal lives through text-to-self connections. Further, book clubs can be instrumental in providing opportunities for participants to take part in oral discourse, and when implemented in classroom settings, can help develop social and emotional discussions revolving around the text (Polleck, 2011). Teachers may face difficulties as to how to engage their diverse readers in meaningful activities around

age appropriate text while also providing instruction each student's individual needs (Raphael, Florio-Ruane, & George, 2001).

Summary of Book Clubs

Although there are limited research studies that focus on parent book clubs developed by elementary schools, it is key to expose families to the structure of a student book club since it includes high text engagement and are frequently part of a school's reading curriculum. Reading is a social activity and a book club can encourage students to form opinions, develop questions, and make connections to past and present cultural experiences, thus support their understanding of the text (Harker, 1987; Raphael, & McMahon, 1994; Rosenblatt, 1978). Book clubs can create parent-child bonds through rich book discussions and it can stimulate cultural connections through other forms of communication, such as with their daily family routines Moll et al., 1992; Moll et al., 2001). There are various types of book clubs some that focus more on training parents how to help their child with their reading skills for higher academic achievement. These book clubs can also teach parents how to further develop their literacy with meaningful deep discussions among other participants and possibly grow to include other community members. For example, the Book Club Project and the Book Club Plus have established essential frameworks for teachers who wish to develop a classroom or school-wide parent-student book club, which can also expand and invite outside community members. (Dail et al., 2009; Raphael & McMahon, 1994).

When schools plan to form a parent book club, it is extremely important to take into account the culture of their student population which can create a mutual and respectful rapport with their parents. Book clubs that embed language considerations parents, such as those of Latinx Spanish speaking ELs, can also have key components that can benefit Latinx bilingual EL

parents. When elementary schools plan to develop a book club for their Latinx bilingual Spanish speaking parents it means to consider providing the cultural background necessary for a more positive experience by integrating both English and Spanish language instruction, materials, and additional resources (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). These book club considerations can help both parents and their children foster bilingualism through text, as well as encourage racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity.

Closing

Providing parents with opportunities to understand the curriculum their children must learn enables them to become part of the learning experience at home. It also brings parents closer to the skills taking place in their child's classroom. A parent book club can utilize a socio-cultural theoretical lens, where parents are able to learn from each other. Parents can bring their own "Funds of Knowledge" to the book club through their background knowledge, which provides them with the opportunities to share. Schools with large Latinx populations can incorporate a Spanish and English book club emphasizing reading, writing, whole class discussions, and instruction – all supported by student-led discussions. Further, the BAC coordinator can note key factors from book club discussions that may provide information to other educators pertaining to instruction. This type of program can develop parent involvement, build stronger parent-school connections, and connect parents to their child's learning.

CHAPTER THREE

This chapter describes the research methodology used for this study, including the

research questions, data sets, and data collection process. The purpose of this study is to

examine Latinx parent text engagement opportunities through an elementary school parent book

club. Given that this book club occurred as part of the school's regular community-school based

activities, its goals were to support parents in their efforts to increase their own literacy skills,

encourage their learning experiences, and increase parental capacity and commitment to work on

literacy school work with their children. To better understand the impact of this activity on

parents, the inquiry utilizes a case study method, specifically exploring Latinx parents'

engagement in this particular school-related activity.

Situating the Study

Research questions. This study focuses on the active participation through text

engagement that took place in a parent book club, and is guided by the following overarching

question: What happens when Latinx Spanish-speaking parents and an elementary school

bilingual coordinator engage in a book club using the same historical fiction text as currently

employed in the school's fifth grade classrooms? The following sub-questions that derive from

this question include:

1. How do Latinx parents demonstrate text engagement in the America Elementary's parent

    Book Club?

2. How do Latinx parents make connections to texts within the America Elementary's

    parent Book Club?

3. What do Latinx parents report as new learning as a result of their interactions with the

    focal texts and other participants in the parent Book Club experience?

Case Study

To examine these questions, I utilized a qualitative case study methodology to research a parent book club setting given that it provides a real-life and contemporary setting in which to pursue the research questions (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) also points out that a "viable" case study is one with clearly identifiable goals that seek to provide an in-depth understanding of a situation. Therefore, in this research, the parent Book Club served as a bounded system, and the case offered an opportunity to understand whether and how Latinx parents connected their lives to those provided in the text discussed during the Book Club. As the school's bilingual coordinator at the time, I facilitated the Book Club discussions to ensure that talk remained focused and/or related to the text. This methodology was comprehensive and well-suited to my research questions because it used multiple data sets and sources of evidence (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2007).

According to Creswell (2009), the goal of a case study is to understand in-depth, descriptive questions, which pertain to the development of a rich understanding of differences in a case study within a bounded system, and provide insight into an issue or a unique case (Creswell, 2009; Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales, 2007). In addition, case study research is a qualitative approach in which the researcher explores a case over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2009; Creswell et al., 2007). For the current study, these data sources included observations, interviews, audio recordings, and written artifacts (Creswell, 2009; Creswell et al., 2007).

My research study consisted of a small group of seven parents from an urban school called America Elementary (a pseudonym). The context of this case study can be described as a "naturalistic" framework (Lincoln & Guba, 1994), since the data that was collected after school

hours at one of the parent's homes, and was a school-supported activity that promotes a school-home partnership. Such a framework allowed me to employ physical, mental, and social abilities when collecting the data, as well as apply a comprehensive analysis (Eisner, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1994; Patton, 1990). For example, parents in the Book Club worked in cooperative groups and had specific hands-on assignments (book projects) related to the focal chapter book and to a picture book, strictly utilized as an introduction for the focal text. These physical and mental case study components brought parents together with the goal of completing the given literacy tasks. A case study design provided multi-layered insights into how parents were engaged through their interactions and how they learned by looking at the text through various lenses.

Research Site

  America Elementary School. The participating parents in the study all had children attending America Elementary, which is part of a large school district and located near a major Midwestern city. At one point in time, America Elementary was located in a European immigrant community made up of families of Slovenia, Croatian, and Serbian heritage. It was surrounded by the steel mill industry, which created jobs for these European immigrants at that time. Currently, America Elementary is comprised of a large Latinx population ranging from first to third generation Latinx families, who are primarily of Mexican origin.

  For nine years, America Elementary had an administration led by a Latinx Spanish-speaking male principal of Mexican American heritage. Before becoming a principal, he was a bilingual compliance facilitator for the school district, a classroom teacher, and a mechanical engineer. During his nine years as principal, he was able to take the school to the district's highest level of school achievement. During his term, there were two male assistant principals of

Mexican American heritage who had previous experience as bilingual teachers (Spanish/English). All three of these individuals left America Elementary prior to this study, and a new administration was in leadership, including a new Spanish-speaking principal.

Over the past eight years, this neighborhood school has also seen an increase in student population, growing from two classes per grade level to its current state of three classrooms per grade level, and the addition of two preschool classrooms with two morning and two afternoon sessions. In 2011, due to an increase in Spanish-speaking families of Latinx descent, one of the two preschool classrooms were designated as bilingual, Spanish-speaking. In addition, America Elementary's, English Learners (ELs) and their parents are provided bilingual support, which includes Spanish-speaking services. In 2007, the total student population consisted of 699 students with 50 Spanish-speaking ELLs. These ELs were serviced by certified bilingual teachers and endorsed English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers within a bilingual program. By 2016, the student population rose to 889 students, 84 of whom were Spanish-speaking ELs in the bilingual program. Almost all of the remaining student population is comprised of students of Latinx decent, who may or may not speak Spanish. At the time of the study, America Elementary had two parent committees, the Bilingual Advisory Committee (BAC) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB), now referred to as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Meetings for both groups were held in English and Spanish; however, at the beginning of each meeting parents were asked if they preferred one of the two languages, and a consensus was required before proceeding. This helped the meeting run more smoothly and saved time from translations. Most parents attending the meetings usually voted to have the meeting conducted in Spanish since the majority of the attendees were bilingual. However, if a parent wished to have a translation from Spanish to English, those requests were accommodated so that no one was

excluded. These committees and the language they employed in meetings supported the school's

efforts to have clear avenues of communication with all parents, including Latinx Spanish-

speaking parents.

As America Elementary's bilingual coordinator from 2005 until 2016, I had the

opportunity to get to know most of the parents who attended BAC meetings. Working closely

with these parents allowed for the establishment of trust and created an openness and acceptance

to exchange personal contact information such as phone numbers to maintain communication

when necessary, without limiting conversations to the assigned meeting times. The most

common form of communication with parents was text messaging, and conversations spanned

beyond issues related to their children or school issues. For example, some parents asked me for

assistance with résumé writing, filling out job applications, or requesting letters of

recommendation, which I was glad to help with before or after school hours on my own free

time. This openness to dialog helped me to develop a strong rapport with parents and established

a sense of trust, which was of utmost importance in relationship to this study. The sense of

community that was cultivated among school parents and me as their advisor even resulted in

parental willingness to open their homes to hold the Book Club sessions there, rather than at the

school.

Bilingual Advisory Committee (BAC). Based on previous experiences, it is my opinion

that parent engagement in an urban school can take place in several ways, depending on the

cultural identity of the school. This study focuses on Spanish-speaking Latinx parents from the

BAC at America Elementary as the key group of participants. It is important to note that district

policy requires schools with a bilingual program to establish a BAC when the school has more

than 19 ELs enrolled. As the bilingual coordinator at this school during the study, also referred

to as the Bilingual Lead Teacher (BLT), I worked closely in a collaborative manner with the BAC. The BAC's focus was to help support bilingual parents by providing engaging learning opportunities for parents that exposed them to educational programs and workshops to assist them when helping their children.

It is also district policy for the BAC to elect five parents annually to serve as committee officers from those parents who regularly attend the meetings. The BAC officer positions are president, vice president, secretary, and two representatives. These officers take on the leadership roles in representing the school's BAC throughout the year. All parents at the school are invited to BAC meetings, which are held in both English and Spanish. The average meeting attendance at the time of study was between 10 and15 participants. The district requires that BAC officers attend several professional development workshops on effective communication, networking, and planning events. The parent planning events is a collaborative effort, and this is where I served in my role as a parent and school liaison. In the past, school staff members and I provided some informational parent workshops. The school's elected BAC parent officers voluntarily devote a great deal of their own free time to plan events. Some of the BAC's activities from 2006 through 2016 consisted of academic endeavors for parents. For example, with my assistance, the BAC brought in college recruiters from local community colleges to promote their adult GED and ESL programs. They also invited outside organizations to provide counseling services to help parents with family social-emotional issues. This was important given that parental understanding of the resources in their local school community helps connect students, their families, and surrounding stakeholders, such as public library, park district, and local businesses (Epstein, 2001; Nathans & Revelle, 2013; Olivos, Jiménez-Castellanos, & Ochoa, 2011).

The school district provides a format for BAC parental involvement that America Elementary followed. This included providing the necessary time and resources to the committee and allowing flexibility to explore various ways of engaging all parents, not just those actively engaged in the BAC. Members of the BAC and I worked closely together to generate ideas or follow through with suggestions brought forth by parents attending the meetings. Although these ideas or suggestions mostly represented the participants in regular attendance the meetings, all parents were encouraged to communicate with me if they were unable to attend. This provided an important avenue of communication critical to enhance parent-school relations and promote meeting attendance.

BAC Book Club History. This study focused on Spanish-speaking Latinx parents who participated in the book reading and discussions during the fall and winter terms of 2016. Of all the BAC activities that the school offers, parent participants continually request to have book clubs. The first Parent Book Club took place in 2012, four years prior to the current study. This activity is open to all parents and is offered once a year on bi-weekly basis for a total of 10 sessions and was held in both English and Spanish to accommodate the linguistic needs of all the parents. During this first year, the Spanish-language Book Club took place in the school's lunchroom in the morning, right after students entered their classrooms and lasted about one hour, while the English-speaking Book Club met after school in the same location for the same time frame. In the following years, the Book Club was only held in Spanish due to a lack of English-only speaking parent participation. Since then, all Book Club meetings held in Spanish have taken place in the school as soon as students started school in the morning. From previous observations of Book Club experiences, it appeared that parents enjoyed reading various types of books, ranging from self-help selections to anthologies of Latinx poetry and realistic fiction, all

originally written in Spanish or translated from English to Spanish. The participating parents

voted to select the books they wanted to read within Book Club. The parents' active

participation and text engagement during the Book Club gatherings also indicated they enjoyed

reading these books from different genres.

It is my opinion that a key factor to Book Club parent participation is the inclusion of

texts that engage parents. As mentioned before, various titles have been successfully utilized

over the years such as *Sun, Stone, and Shadows 20 Great Mexican Short Stories* (Hernandez,

2008), *Bless Me Ultima* (Anaya, 1995), *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* (Kiyosaki, 2011), and *Esperanza*

Rising (Munoz Ryan, 2000). While some of these books were written by Latinx authors and had

similar cultural themes, one book that stands out is the children's book *Esperanza Rising* (Munoz

Ryan, 2000). A parent suggested this book during a BAC meeting because her child was reading

it for school. The rest of the parents were receptive to her recommendation, and so the Book

Club decided to focus on this text. Instead of reading the English version the children were

reading in school, the parents chose to read the Spanish translation. During my observations of

Book Club discussions over the years, I noticed that the majority of the parents made text-to-self

connections related to their Mexican American heritage. It also appeared that the discussions

allowed parents to actively interact with one another, which was not surprising since the lives of

the characters in the books paralleled the lives of several of the parents. What was surprising,

however, was that the discussions sometimes revealed that parents wanted to understand their

own children's literacy development. In particular, they wanted to know more about, as well as

try out certain reading activities that their own children were experiencing in their school reading

instruction. For example, I recall during some of the Book Club sessions parents began reporting

that they talked to their children more often about what they were reading in school to allow

them to continue to engage in text-related discussions, which opened opportunities for me to share some reading strategies with them to try with their students at home. Further, the decision to utilize a text during the Book Club that was also part of the school's reading curriculum appeared to motivate parents to consistently attend Book Club sessions.

The Focal Book Club. As previously noted, the overall goal of the Book Club experience in general was to have parents read, discuss literature, and be exposed to specific literacy skills, such as focusing on making connections with the focal books during discussions. In addition, the use of a graphic organizer and specific reading activities assisted in the development of the parents' own literacy skills. All of these activities were designed to deepen their interactions with the texts and provide insight into what their own children may be doing when engaging with texts in their classroom. One common element of each Book Club session was a specific time dedicated to oral discussions of the focal book. In order to ensure that parents talked about the given book topics, I asked minimal questions at the beginning of each session so that parents were encouraged to share their thoughts freely without feeling restricted to follow my lead.

This study's Book Club consisted of five sessions focusing two children's books. I used a picture book titled *The Whispering Town* by Jennifer Elvgren (2014) as a brief introduction to the historical topic of the Holocaust. The focal text was a chapter book titled, *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry (1989). It was a two-month time frame that started in October and ended in November 2016. The group of parents met once a week for an hour after school at one of their homes for a total of five weeks. This schedule allowed parents sufficient time between sessions to read the designated sections of the text at their leisure, and sessions were not so far apart as to cause participants to forget the material they read. The sessions emphasized parent group

discussions of the text, although some included a literacy activity that served as a tool to promote active participation. In addition, I asked and reminded parents to let me know when they needed help or ideas to better understand the text.

At the beginning of each Book Club session, I welcomed the group and started the dialogue with prompts like, "Did anyone have a question about what they have read?" or "What was something interesting that you read?" This helped me initiate the sessions and generate parent discussion and textual engagement. At the first session, which also served as an introduction to the Holocaust, I asked more general questions such as: "Can someone tell me what you think World War II was about?" and "What are some things that happened during this war?" Opening questions in the second session were more specific, namely, "After having read further in this children's book since the last session, what are some of the things that happened to the Jewish people?" and "How do you feel about what the German Nazis did to the Jewish people?" By the third session, the group knew the process and were able to start asking questions among themselves. I encouraged them to ask questions, and in a few instances, they organically did so.

Participants

Although the America's School BAC is open to all parents, there is a core group that regularly volunteers by helping teachers, assisting with school-wide events, and inviting other parents through word of mouth. Seven Latinx parents with children attending America Elementary participated in this research study, with five who specifically demonstrated consistent attendance at previous BAC meetings and involvement with the school. Originally, there were six parents who were to participate in this Book Club, but one of these parents brought a friend to the first meeting who wished to be included. This woman also had children

attending the school and frequently attended BAC meetings. Thus, this unexpected addition to the group seemed to be appropriate given that her close friend, and study participant, had encouraged her to attend. Additionally, one of the study participants was a new parent who had recently enrolled her child at the school and consequently decided to be part of the study's Book Club. Given that this parent activity was part of regular BAC parent events, I felt that it was important to include this new parent participant, since it could possibly encourage other new parents to also begin attending upcoming BAC meetings, and potentially even participate in another future Book Club following the current case study.

Parents participating in this study were informed of my qualitative case study and the Book Club during the first BAC meeting of the year in September 2016. At that time, I asked the fourteen parents in attendance if anyone might be interested in being a part of a Book Club qualitative case study. Eight parents immediately indicated they were interested, but two of them decided not to attend for personal reasons a few days later. There were four other parents that wanted to participate, but could not meet after school at the off-campus site. I informed them that this Book Club had to meet off-campus solely for the purposes of the study, and they indicated interest in participating in future Book Clubs upon completion of the study, provided sessions could be held in the school. I assured them that we would definitely have another Book Club after the study.

The core group of BAC parents comes from various Mexican American backgrounds, including four first-generation immigrants and two second-generation U.S.-born participants whose parents are Mexican immigrants. Table 1 lists the parents (using pseudonyms), their

language use of choice[2], generational status, and number of children attending the school at the time of the study. This table is organized by the number of years the participants lived in the U.S. in descending order:

Table 1

America Elementary Book Club participants and backgrounds

Pseudonyms	Language of Choice	Generational Status	No. of Years in the U.S.	Number of Children
Angie	English, Spanish	Second	n/a	2
Mari	English, Spanish	Second	n/a	3
Ann	Spanish	First	29	1
Roxy	Spanish	First	20	2
Naty	Spanish	First	17	2
Ale	Spanish	First	16	1
Bren	Spanish	First	16	3

Coincidentally, Ann and Roxy were both born in the same city in Mexico. Ann is older and arrived in United States in 1989, whereas Roxy immigrated in 1998. Ann's background includes one year of community college where she took classes in ESL, basic mathematics, and language, and she last worked as a secretary. Roxy's educational background consisted of high school completion and she is an avid reader who wants to eventually attend college. Both Ann and Roxy can understand English and speak it with some difficulty depending on the context.

Naty was also born in in a rural area in Mexico where she was able to complete what we would refer to as elementary school, as well as one year of high school. She explained that she was unable to complete high school due to several family hardships which resulted in her immigration to the United States in 2001. Naty is currently taking English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to improve her limited English proficiency.

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[2] Parents were asked about language preference in an informal setting by the researcher.

Ale was born and raised in a rural town called Capula in Mexico. She explained that school was difficult for her because she had to help her mother take care of her siblings. Ale stated that she completed elementary school and immigrated to the United States in 2002 when she 17 years old.

Bren was the new addition to the Book Club who was invited by Ale. She is a first-generation immigrant born in Mexico, who arrived in the U.S. when she was fourteen years old where she attended middle and high school. Bren indicated that she understands English, but that it is difficult for her to communicate in this language. Mari and Angie were both born in the United States, although their parents were born in Mexico. Both completed high school and Mari took a few community college courses. All seven parents are stay-at-home mothers and actively took part in the school's events, including BAC meetings.

The selection of these participants was based on two major considerations, namely, the convenience of the sampling and the desire of the school's administration to improve communication with and provide engaging educational opportunities for parents of Latinx students. A convenience sampling is one in which the subjects are easily accessible to the researcher (Heppner & Heppner, 2004), which in this case study was most applicable given my work as the BAC coordinator at the time, as well as my role within the school. Further, the data collected provided helpful information to share with the school's fifth grade teachers who use the same text with their students, and thus meet administer goals for my work with Latinx families.

All fourteen participants in attendance at the first BAC meeting in September were offered the opportunity to take part in the Book Club and my qualitative research case study, and participants were selected based on their willingness to commit to all five Book Club sessions. Six parents – Ann, Roxy, Naty, Ale, Angie, and Mari – agreed to take part in the study in

addition to another parent, Bren, who was not present at the BAC meeting but was invited by one of the parents in the Book Club. These interested parents were given a consent form printed in both in English (Appendix A) and Spanish (Appendix B) that described the study and requested their voluntary participation. I explained to these parents that I would visit each of their homes at a convenient time for them after school and stated that I would go over any questions they may have had about the consent form before they signed, and upon completing the form, that I would ask them to complete a parent demographic form in either English (see Appendix E) or Spanish (see Appendix F). Bren signed her form before the start of session one and completed the demographic form after the session was completed. Although there were more parents that wanted to participate, the Book Club was capped at seven because it was to meet at one of the participant's home and more than eight individuals (myself included), would simply be too many adults to impose on the parent hosting the sessions. Also, in my experience, more than seven participants in a Book Club tends to limit the time and frequency of interaction.

My Role in the Book Club

As the bilingual coordinator for America Elementary, I played an instrumental role within the Book Club as an active participant and researcher. During each session, I communicated with the group in a similar manner to the way I conducted BAC meetings so as to ensure that parents felt comfortable. It was important that I remained open-minded throughout each meeting, rather than expect that the participants would comprehend or enjoy every activity in each session. Thus, I organized each session and led the discussions in a way that would encourage the group to engage in the entire session. Specifically, I started each session with some questions pertaining to the chapters assigned to the group. There were some instances where I probed participants with some questions when I noticed confusion with the text. I made

sure I was available to answer any questions the participants had, and occasionally redirected the discussion back on topic when parents engaged in talk completely unrelated to the text chapters under discussion. Before the start of the first session, I advised the parents that it was important to listen to one another's comments and respect one another's thoughts about the text.

Although I helped guide the activities that were incorporated within each session, I was cognizant of the importance of allowing sufficient time for discussions and of letting parents take the lead role in them. Thus, I made sure to build in flexibility for the group to decide what they wanted to discuss from the text during each session. In addition to the book discussions, some parents spontaneously asked for ways to help their child read using specific reading strategies. To accommodate these requests, I incorporated some pre-planned activities in each session based on parent requests from previous sessions, in order to proactively address inquiries during the Book Club sessions. For example, I used graphic organizers, such as Exit Slips (Fisher & Frey, 2004) and Stretch-to-Sketch worksheets (Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988), and reflective thinking by asking questioning about the text. These tools complimented the specific reading activity in each session. As both instructor and coordinator, there were moments in which I took on the role of a teacher during the sessions, and parents seemed receptive to me in this role. Additionally, there were some sessions where some parents took the lead in discussions and I became more of an observer and participant than and a researcher and teacher.

Data Collection and Procedures

Data Sets

The following data sets were collected during this study:

1. Audiotaped participant discussions of all five Book Club sessions

2. Participant written/artistic artifacts:

     a. Demographic Form

     b. Sketch to Stretch/Drawing Visible Representation

     c. Exit Slip

3. Participant interviews:

     a. Participants were asked to complete a pre-study interview and a post-study interview. Due to scheduling constraints, only three participants completed the pre-study interview before Book Club Session 1. The six original participants all completed the post-study interview after Session 5.

     b. All seven participants completed a final reflection form after Session 5.

4. Researcher Written Artifacts:

     a. Retrospective Field Notes for all five sessions

     b. Reflective Journal for all five sessions with two entries per day, taking forty-five minutes each entry, for a total of ten entries

     c. Transcribed and translated scripts from all Book Club discussions

Audiotaped Book Club sessions. Each Book Club session and parent interview was taped, after which I listened to and transcribed them first into Spanish, and then specific sections into English as necessary for readers of this dissertation.

Participant written artifacts. During the Book Club sessions, the group completed the different written and artistic responses to the portions of the texts read. An Exit Slip (Fisher & Frey, 2004) was used for responses at the end of the first session. Here, parents were asked to respond to one or all three of the following prompts: 1) something they learned, 2) something that confused them, and 3) something they would like to do in the next session. Parents were encouraged to use whichever language they were most comfortable with (English or Spanish).

Using a sheet of drawing paper, they participated in a Sketch-to-Stretch (Hearst, Short, & Burke, 1988) in Session 5, drawing symbols or favorite parts of the text. Afterwards, they took turns showing their drawings to one another while providing a brief explanation of their images. All participants were asked to write a final reflection during/after Session 5, which included the following prompts: 1) "Please share some of your favorite highlights from the book," and 2) "Please reflect and share some of the positives and negatives of the Book Club."

   Researcher written artifacts. After each session, I recorded retrospective notes which allowed me to think about certain observations of the group's interactions. These notes also gave me the opportunity to reflect on certain nonverbal, physical aspects not captured on the audio, such as facial expressions, gestures, and movement. In addition, this enabled me to recollect specific details from each session, as well as make adjustments for future book discussions. I also kept a reflective journal throughout the study, which helped to organize my thoughts.

   Interviews. All participants completed a Demographic Form in either English (see Appendix E) or Spanish (see Appendix F), wherein they provided information regarding their birthplace and education level(s). In addition, three of the seven participants completed both a pre- and post-study semi-structured interview, which took place individually and in their own homes. The pre-study interview employed an interview guide focusing on participants' views of education and parental text engagement (see Appendix G). Finally, these same three participants also took part in a semi-structured post interview (see Appendix H) to follow up on their views in these areas. Some of the pre- and post-interviews were conducted in both Spanish and English which allowed parents to use their language of choice and offered a better opportunity for them to provide detailed answers to the interview questions. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed/translated into English.

Because these interviews occurred individually in participants' homes, I was able to redirect the discussion if a parent strayed from answering specific questions, and to control the lines of questioning (Creswell, 2009). At the same time, the semi-structured nature of these interviews allowed new ideas to be brought up during the interview as a result of the interviewee's statements (Creswell, 2009). Finally, such interview experiences encouraged me to continue to build rapport with the participants and to foster their cooperation (Lichtman, 2010). This process helped provide insightful feedback from the parents on their perceptions of the meaning of parental text engagement. In addition, they highlighted the partnership between school and parent to child. The interviews were an avenue for parents to voice their views and ideas and describe their Book Club experience, while also providing insight into the school's efforts to encourage parental engagement through the Book Club.

Text Selection

As I listened to parents discuss the texts in BAC Book Clubs prior to this study, I became aware of their strong desire to read a book their child would read in school. In fact, during our final Book Club session of spring 2016, some parents voiced opinions that the next Book Club should read a text grounded in a different genre and cultural event than that of their Mexican heritage. The rationale for this was that, while they enjoyed reading texts with Latinx themes, they wanted to expand beyond this. Thus, I took this request into consideration, together with the idea that the next focal text should be one that most parents would be able to share with their children, either immediately or in the near future. When I suggested a historical-fiction book set during the Holocaust focusing on a Jewish family titled *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry (1989), parents discussed the idea during one BAC meeting and thought it was a good idea. They appeared interested, although decided that an important criterion for selecting such a text would

be its availability in both English and Spanish editions to ensure accessibility for all participants, regardless of their facility with either language. Provided the option for parents to read the text in English or Spanish was essential, since five participants selected Spanish and two selected English, thus providing the necessary accommodations. I suggested this specific text, since it is used in the fifth-grade curriculum, which is what the parents had requested. At the final BAC meeting in spring 2016, I proposed the idea of purchasing copies for the first parent Book Club in the fall of 2016. The parents appeared to be extremely pleased given that the book a) was about a different culture, b) described a certain historical point in time, and c) was utilized in the school's fifth-grade reading curriculum.

Another factor that made *Number the Stars* a strong title for inclusion in this study was that it won the John Newbery Medal in 1990, meaning that it was considered to be the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children published in 1989. In other words, it was considered to be marked by: a) eminence and distinction--noted for significant achievement, b) excellence in quality, c) conspicuous excellence or eminence; and was d) individually distinct (Association for Library Service to Children, 2008).

The book is set in Denmark in 1943 during World War II and presents a western European culture perspective. The protagonist is 10-year-old Annemarie Johansen, who helps save her Jewish best friend Ellen Rosen, along with Ellen's family from the German Nazis. At the time, the Nazis occupied Denmark and were in the process of "relocating" all Danish Jews, so Annemarie's family hides Ellen by tricking the Nazi soldiers into believing she is Annemarie's sister, given that there had been a sister who had died. This plausible story outsmarted the Nazi soldiers, but they still had to go through several frightening situations that endangered both families. During the story, Annemarie demonstrates courage and perseverance,

resulting in the completion of the Rosen family's escape plan. She did this by carrying a special handkerchief tainted with cocaine to her uncle on his boat so as to trick and confuse the Nazis' vicious guard dogs. Annemarie barely reached the escape boat to hand it to him in time. It was this heroic deed that saved the Rosens, and her friendship with Ellen remained a special bond for her as she knew the family was safe as they sailed for Sweden and its policy of neutrality--a refuge for Jews.

In order to situate *Number the Stars* text within a broader context for participants, I decided to make use of specific portions of a fiction picture book early in the Book Club sessions. This book, *The Whispering Town* by Jennifer Elvgren (2014), is only available in English, which meant that I read it as-is and then translated it into Spanish. Like *Number the Star*s, this text is set during the Holocaust within a small Danish fishing village and focuses on how one family hides a Jewish woman and her son from the Nazis until they can help them escape to Sweden. *The Whispering Town* is a 2015 nominee for the Jane Addams Children's Book Award, an honor which "recognizes children's books of literary and aesthetic excellence that effectively engage children in thinking about peace, social justice, global community, and equity for all people" (James Addams Peace Association, 2017).

Data Collection Timeline and Procedures

Table 2 describes the timeline for data collection, which is examined in light of the data collection procedures, namely, field notes and a reflective journal throughout the course of the study.

Table 2

Book Club timeline for data collection

Focus	Dates	Name of Parent/s
Home Visits / Consent Forms & Demographic Forms	09/30/2016	Naty, Roxy, Ann
Home Visits / Consent Forms & Demographic Forms	10/03/2016	Mari, Angie, Ale
Home Visit / Demographic Forms & Pre-Interviews	10/04/2016 10/05/2016	Ale, Ann Roxy
Session 1	10/20/2016	All Seven Parents[*]
Session 2	10/27/2016	All Seven Parents
Session 3	11/03/2016	All Seven Parents
Session 4	11/10/2016	All Seven Parents
Session 5	11/17/2016	All Seven Parents
Home Visit / Post-Interviews & Final Reflections	11/28/2016 11/29/2016	Ale & Ann Roxy
Final Reflections	11/29/2016	Bren
Final Reflections	11/30/2016 12/01/2016	Naty Mari, Angie

[*] *Bren unexpectedly attended this session and completed the Consent Form before it began and the Demographic Form afterwards.*

Before the first Book Club meeting, I was able to meet each participant, with the

exception of Bren, in their home after school to discuss a parent consent form in English

(Appendix C) and in Spanish (Appendix D), which they signed. These visits allowed the

participants to ask questions about the study and gave me the opportunity to gather some brief

language proficiency? information and contact information. Parents were also given a

demographic form in English (Appendix E) and/or in Spanish (Appendix F) to provide

information pertaining to their background, such as birthplace and education level[3]. In addition,

three of the participants were given a pre-Book Club interview using an interview guide in both

English and Spanish (see Appendix G). Interview prompts focused on parent reading

experiences and interactions with their child's reading. These interviews were audio-recorded.

       Table 3 outlines the steps that I utilized for the Book Club. This will provide a format so

that other schools can consider following in order to help guide the development of their own

Book Club. Keep in mind, the bilingual coordinator or teacher leader needs to conduct a pre-

planning BAC parent meeting in May of previous school year so that parents can discuss the

selection and vote for the specific text/s to be utilized during the next school year. It also will

provide a good idea as to how many Spanish and English text editions to purchase, based on the

parents input. Moreover, by selecting the text in May, the school can make this purchase with

sufficient time for delivery to be ready to use at the beginning of the new school year. In

addition, the book discussions will be conducted in the preferred language of the parent/s. For

example, in the study, the parents decided to discuss the text in Spanish, even though two parents

made few statements in English.

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[3] While this information was not requested formally or as part of the study, the existing relationship between the parents and the researcher allowed the Book Club participants to feel comfortable in sharing this information.

Table 3

Book Club Outline

Meeting	Timing
Parent Meeting	New School Year BAC / Parent Meeting. Committee decides days and times of Book Club. Establish Number of Sessions and Duration.
Introduction Meeting	October-Late November Before Thanksgiving Holiday – Begin Book Club
Session 1	Use a mentor text to introduce the book's theme/topic, teacher reads aloud, only key pages, and discuss those key points reflective of the book's theme/topic. Utilize Exit Slip towards the end of the session, provide Spanish and/or English texts, assign two or three chapters to read and discuss during next session.
Session 2	Ask parents to discuss and reread their favorite part/s of the assigned chapter/s and ask questions about the setting and key characters. Utilize previous session's Exit Slips to go over possible connections made among the group. Assign chapters to discuss for next week.
Session 3	Discussion of assigned chapters focus on one literacy activity, e.g. figurative language, main idea, vocabulary /context clues, etc. Place emphasis on key words to describe character traits, as well as rereading short passages. Assign chapters to discuss for next week.
Session 4	Discuss assigned readings, ask questions pertaining to their favorite part/s, and parents reread aloud key passages of the chapter/s. Review key points and identify possible connections made. Utilize a "mini" Close Read literacy strategy, discuss the strategy's purpose, and model the process. Assign next chapters to read.
Session 5	Discuss assigned chapters, parents reread key points, and review "mini" Close Read from previous session. Partner up parents to utilize Sketch to Stretch literacy activity and place emphasis on visualization strategy. Teacher models how to complete the activity using a "think aloud." Parents explain their completed Sketch to Stretch and have parents write a final reflection placing emphasis on what they learned from the text.
Session 6	Conduct a BAC parent meeting in February to select another text for the next Book Club.

The outline provides a guide to help the teacher leading the school's Book Club. The first session does consist more of teacher talk in order to help guide the parents to the concept of a Book Club discussion; therefore, it is recommended to use several open-ended questions as well as encouraging statements. These questions should encourage parents to provide details or additional explanations. Some possible questions can be, "What do you think the picture is trying to tell us? How does the statement on this page make you feel? What was your favorite part of the story?" Some encouraging statements or phrases can be, "Let's go over this page and discuss what the characters are doing. Tell me more about why you think the author is trying to tell us." These types of open-ended questions and statements/phrases will help guide the Book Club as well provide an idea if some participants were able to comprehend the assigned chapters or if they may need to go over the key points. For example, there were some sessions where one or two parents who were very quiet. When noticing this, I recommend that the teacher rereads aloud the specific section of the text that will lead to possibly answering the questions related to the discussion. Noticing the group's facial expressions that appear confused or unsure are strong indicators were paraphrasing comments from other participants, as well as rephrasing the open-ended questions.

During each session, the group's discussions provided formative responses that allowed me to analyze their understanding of the text. For example, during the discussions parents made text-to-self connections which indicated that they were comprehending the text. Also, the literacy activities provided me with a written formative assessment, such as the Exit Slips, Close Read, and Sketch to Stretch all of which demonstrated various levels of understanding. These activities complemented the group's discussions, thus showing the group's knowledge. Nonverbal gestures, such as facial expressions that consisted of smiles, laughter, and the often-

positive sounds of "oh" and "aha" indicated that they were understanding the text as well as having fun. Moreover, their final reflection and post-interviews supported positive results to demonstrate new learning from each.

There are several literacy activities that can be selected by the teacher to utilize during the sessions. This is why it is imperative to plan ahead of time, in order to organize specific activities, such as the ones used in the study. The teacher can decide which activities based on input from the parents. The activities that were utilized in the study were requested by parents wanting to understand what literacy strategies are commonly used in 5th grade reading classrooms. The following provides more detail of each session, which includes the specific literacy activities.

Session 1. As previously noted, all Book Club sessions occurred outside America Elementary School at the end of the school day and after parents took their children home. They then reunited at the home of one of the parents. During Session 1, I introduced a mentor text so that parents could become familiar with the topic of the Holocaust and we had a group discussion. The goal was to help them articulate their perceptions or any preconceived notions pertaining to the Holocaust.

Again, I started this session by reading aloud a mentor text in English, focusing on specific sections of the text titled *The Whispering Town* (Elvgren, 2014), after which I translated these parts into Spanish. This book was not read in its entirety, as I only read aloud its initial pages given that these presented a solid background to promote discussion related to the Holocaust. All parents were encouraged to take part in the discussion of this text. While reading, I paused at certain pre-determined points where there are connections to *Number the Stars*. For example, emphasis is placed on the book's setting in order to provide insight into how

certain countries helped Jewish people during the Holocaust. Another key point is the way

Jewish individuals escaped using boats with secret compartments. At the end of the session, I

utilized an Exit Slip (Appendix H), which served as a tool to gather feedback from the parents.

Parents were asked to write what they learned and/or to ask questions. The Exit Slip included a

section where parents provided feedback on how they felt about the session. They were offered

a choice between an English or Spanish language Exit Slip. Once the Exit Slip was completed,

the parents were given a copy of *Number the Stars* in either English or Spanish and I asked them

to read the first four chapters before the next Book Club session.

  Session 2. For Session 2, parents were given the choice to first either discuss the

previous session or the assigned chapter readings. The parents were indifferent to the options, so

I suggested they reread parts of the first four chapters that they felt were key to the story. Time

was allocated for this rereading, after which they shared their thoughts and insights related to the

text. A lengthy group discussion occurred towards the middle of this session that focused on

connections to questions from their Exit Slips from the first Book Club session. After these were

addressed, and toward the end of Session 2, the group realized that we would need to continue

the discussion in Session 3 as there was not enough time left that day. At this point, I assigned

the readings of chapters 5 through 8 for Session 3.

  Session 3. In this session, we reviewed some remaining questions about previous

chapters from Session 2, and then I guided a mini-reading lesson to assist the group experience

how metaphors are used within the text. I explained that a metaphor is a figure of speech that

compares two unrelated things that share some similar characteristics. I went over some

examples of metaphors in the text, where we discussed the author's potential purpose for their

use. As an example, I used the phrase "her tears were like the rain falling on the ground" to

explain that this is a simile comparing a person's tears to rain. I then explained that this phrase could be transformed into a metaphor by removing the word "like" so that it would read, "her tears were the rain falling on the ground." In addition, I noted that that the fifth-grade reading curriculum at America Elementary School emphasizes the analysis of metaphors and thus was an area of focus in the Book Club sessions. Next, I asked the group to identify sections of the text from the assigned chapters that appealed to them or that were key to their understanding of the story. Afterward, they volunteered to share their insights of the specific reading sections they highlighted and the session concluded with the next reading assignment of chapters 9 through 12.

Session 4. Just like Session 3, this session also included a discussion of the assigned chapters with ample time allocated for parents to share insights related to the text. Parents were also asked which sections of the text they preferred to focus on, which was followed by a discussion of their interpretations and connections. Similar to Session 2, some parents chose to reread aloud sections of the text that were of importance to them. Some parents asked me to demonstrate another reading activity that is used in reading classrooms. I had planned another activity, so I modeled the first step of how to complete a reading analysis process using a "mini" Close Read on a section of chapter 11. I focused on the author's use of words for deeper meaning. A Close Read (Fisher & Frey, 2012) is a deep analysis of a text; however, due to time constraints, I demonstrated an abbreviated version of this reading strategy. This session concluded when parents were assigned to finish reading the rest of the book (chapters 13 through 17) prior to the next session.

Session 5. This session started by completing the Close Read from the previous session, followed by a quick review of the specifics and purposes of a close read. I explained that a Close Read looks at the selected text with a deeper analytical lens, since it encourages the reader to

mark the text and then discuss their own findings. I also emphasized that a Close Read can also incorporate other materials that connect to the content of the selected text such as videos, audio recordings, maps, and other visual representations, as these can enrich and deepen a student's reading comprehension. I explained that a Close Read can help the reader "dig deeper," that is, think beyond what is written in the selected text to make connections, develop questions, and make inferences, as well as other high order level thinking. Again, for the study, parents were exposed to a shorter version of the Close Read (a "mini" Close Read), which still provided the essence of textual analysis within a shorter period of time.

During Session 5, I preselected a specific section and provided the necessary guided practice for parents to experience the Close Read, focusing on identifying key words the author used to enrich the text. Before silently rereading this section of the text, I asked parents to underline what they thought were key words while reading, and upon completion, they shared their words with a brief rationale in a group discussion. Next, I extended the focus of the text by once again reading aloud this same text selection, followed by another brief discussion about why the author may have used certain words in the text.

 Finally, the group participated in a Sketch-to-Stretch activity (Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988) to culminate the book and further expose parents to strategies that good readers use to help with text comprehension. Here, I explained that their children are taught to visualize a text when reading and to record their mental images by sketching them out and discussing them, and that they, too, would draw their own mental images related to the last chapters of the book. I modeled the activity by re-reading aloud a small section of one of these chapters and then completed a "think aloud" (Kucan & Beck, 1997) in which I orally described the images that came to mind. Next, I drew a picture of my images on a graphic organizer (Appendix I) and

explained how these were prompted by the words the author used, which provided a meaningful visual description of the reading. Parents then followed these same steps, each silently rereading their favorite section and creating their own drawings or sketches of their mental images on their graphic organizers. When the assignment was completed, parents were encouraged to share their drawings and their meanings.

Session 5 was the last Book Club meeting, and since additional time was allotted for sharing their images, there was not sufficient time to provide them with the Final Reflection form. Instead, we briefly discussed their opinions of the book as a whole, as well as their favorite parts. Parents also noted their thoughts on the use of the Exit Slip, the Close Read activity, and the Sketch to Stretch visualization strategy.

Post Book Club Activities. After Session 5, I met with each parent in their own home to have them generate their Final Reflection in either English or Spanish using a specific form (Appendix J). I also met individually with the subgroup of three parents who participated in pre-interviews, scheduling these meetings after school in their homes to complete post-Book Club interviews (see Appendix K).

Data Analysis

The data analysis utilized the three questions posed for this study. From these questions and each session's discussions I was able to analyze and code the data. Through the use of my journal, audio recordings, and interviews I was able to organize my results. In addition, the literacy activities provided the content to develop the study's themes. For example, during the discussions parents made text-to-self, text-to-world, and text-to-text/video connections. As parents discussed certain topics from the text, they compared these topics to their past or present life experiences. These text-to-self connections also provided evidence of text engagement. In

some cases, when I analyzed the three types of parent connections, some overlapped into text engagement, which I included in my coding. I organized each specific type of connection, thus forming my themes based on the three types of connections.

Data from parent text engagement developed another theme. As previously mentioned, when parents made their connections, it was also evidence of text engagement. Parents were able to demonstrate engagement to the text during discussions and through the questions they posed, their non-verbal gestures, and the completion of each literacy activity. In addition, when parents voluntarily read aloud during the sessions, it was an indicator of text engagement. Also, text engagement embeds the third and last theme of parents demonstrating new learning. Although planned literacy activities presented data to represent text engagement, it also provided evidence of new learning. Moreover, analyzing the parents' spontaneous new learning formed part of the data, which was unexpected, yet significant to the coding for this theme. For this reason, discussions within each session reflect some data from the other two themes; however, it is key to include the analysis of the pre-and post-interviews and final reflections. Including the interviews and final reflections provided a stronger analysis for coding. This method consisted of choosing pieces of data, such as parent interviews, final reflections, and literacy activities, and evaluating it against the rest of the data for similarities and differences, so as to illuminate connections between emerging themes and codes related to the participants' points of view (Heppner & Heppner, 2004).

Conclusion

This chapter provided background on the focal school district, including school-wide resources that it provides to encourage Spanish-speaking Latinx parental involvement. It also explored the development of partnerships between parents and the school, highlighting America

Elementary's Book Clubs with its the goals of promoting parental literacy and developing home-school connections. Next, it explored the specific Book Club study that served as the case for this inquiry, noting that it arose as a result of parent requests for exposure to the books and literacy activities experienced by their children in classroom reading instruction. Finally, the chapter outlined specific data sets collected, the timeline and processes by which they were collected, and data analysis measures employed.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

This chapter provides key data obtained through a case study consisting of five one-hour book club sessions with related activities and seven participant interviews. In the following sections, I present findings relevant to each research question, supported by transcript excerpts from the discussions and interviews and my reflective journal entries.

The participating parents in the America Elementary's Book Club consisted of seven Latinx Spanish-speaking parents, all married females, three of whom had children in fifth grade who read the focus Book Club text later in the year. The remaining three parents had children in fourth and third grades. I found it interesting that the group wanted to read a children's chapter book that their own sons and daughters would eventually read as part of their reading fifth grade literacy curriculum. Since they were interested in reading about a historical, global event such as the Holocaust, I chose to use sections of a children's picture book with similar themes as an introduction to this topic. Thus, use of this text served as a as pre-reading activity to facilitate a hands-on writing exercise towards the end of session one. Additionally, the parents also expressed a desire to experience literacy reading strategies similar to those practiced in their children's reading instruction. Thus, specific literacy reading activities were employed during the study in response to this request.

Parents Demonstrations of Engagement

The analysis in this section focuses on the following research question pertaining to parent text engagement: How do Latinx parents demonstrate their text engagement in America Elementary's Book Club?

There were varying levels of textual engagement among the parents in each Book Club discussion as is evidenced in the following sections. One example occurred early in the study when I asked parents questions related to illustrations from the picture book, *The Whispering Town* by Jennifer Elvgren (2014). At this point, they unexpectedly formed their own unprompted inquiries as they unknowingly made inferences about the text. The reason I feel the parents unconsciously made inferences was due to explanations they gave that utilized context clues from the text, in addition to the face that I did not guide/lead them into making their inferences. In addition, I noted in my journal entries that when some of the parents asked questions, they exhibited facial gestures that communicated interest in the text (e.g., widened eyes, head nods in agreement, and smiles while saying "aha"). During each session, there were some discussions that stood out regarding strong parent participation, particularly when parents were able to visualize certain parts of the picture book or the chapter book at its climax. Finally, participants became highly engrossed in completing specific, hands-on written literacy activities related to the texts. Parental text engagement in peer group, collaborative activities was evidenced in their verbal, written, and nonverbal cues.

Non-prompted questions and inferences. Although noticeable during each session, parental involvement exhibited a sense of urgency at the beginning of the book as parents wanted to understand the location of the two countries (settings) in the story. This increased as the group asked several questions and referenced the illustrations and spontaneously made inferences to the story based on their analysis of the illustrations. As the discussion flowed, it almost appeared that parents were going off-topic, but they ended up coming back to the book in a somewhat humorous manner. The questions that the parents asked, in essence, drove the text engagement to a higher level, while also providing a sense of curiosity amongst group members as evidenced

in the following. For example, in the discussion that follows, Naty, Ann, and Roxy analyzed two

illustrations from the text and asked questions while also making inferences about the setting of

the story. To add perspective, this discussion was a response to Naty's question as to the setting

of the story and the names of the countries the story referenced, which were not immediately

stated in the first three pages of the story. (It should be noted that prior to the study, the

participants called me Teacher and continued to do so during the study as a sign of respect,

which is common in some Latinx cultures. For the purpose of the study, I will reference myself

as RT for Researcher – Teacher in data excerpts.)

> Naty: (smiling) Denmark and Sweden. Oh, ok.

> RT: Yes, it is important to know the location of the story because sometimes we start in a certain place and then it could change location. Does anyone have questions about the location of the story? What do you think, Ann?

> Ann: This last picture shows snow; the people are wearing coats. Do you think they are cold?

> RT: You are right, these two pages don't tell us what kind of weather and we don't know what kind of climate or season it is in Denmark. What do you think, Roxy?

> Roxy: Yes, I think the weather is cold; maybe it's always cold at that place, maybe?

> Mari: (looking directly at me and smiling) Is it cold in those places, those countries?

> RT: I'm not sure about Denmark or Sweden. They might have seasons like us? What does anyone else think?

> Ann: Well, we know that they left at night, so it's cold at night. But how far did they have to go to escape?

> RT: You mean how many hours?

> Ann: Yes, like distance. Like from here to Mexico, it takes so many days.

> RT: I'm not sure. That's a good question, I can find out for next week.

> Ale: Teacher, the snow in the book, where the town is, in Denmark, we can get an idea?

Naty: Denmark is the place in the story and Sweden is the place where the Jews go.

Ale: Yes, for safety, to escape.

RT: Angie, you look like you want to say something. Would you like to share?

Angie: I just wonder how many other countries went through this same thing? Like, how bad it was for all of them. The other pictures look different and these last two are like it's okay or safe.

RT: Yes, the pictures.

Ann: (pointing at the illustration) The water looks calm. It's night, and it might not be that far away.

RT: Anyone else?

Roxy: The picture looks like the boat is on its way to safety for the Jews. I wonder if they did this a lot, at that time? Like Angie said.

RT: What does anyone think? Bren, what do you think?

Bren: Can I Google a map of, what's the place?

Ale: Denmark? Sweden?

Bren: Yes.

RT: It's okay, but for next week's session, I will make sure I have a map for all of you. Tell us what you think from the pictures or about what I read?

Angie: (interrupting Bren) I think they are close because in the picture (pointing to the illustration) they can see the boat going to the place.

Bren: (smiling) Yes, it looks close.

RT: Anyone else?

Naty: (curious look, squinting) I wonder what other countries are around there?

Ann: (stern look) Europe is that region. It's not big.

RT: I am glad that you asked about the area, the region.

Angie: (smiling and jokingly) Have you been there?

Ale: (smiling) Let's all go! (Angie, Roxy, and Naty giggle)

RT: (smiling) Well, I can't, but I'm glad you asked, I am definitely getting a map for all of you next week (the parents all smile).

It was such a great feeling when the parents were interested in the geography of the two countries and other European countries that were affected by the Nazi invasion. Through their questions and laughter towards the end of that discussion, I noticed how they were engaged with the text. Using the picture book to describe the setting provided a sense of curiosity in regards to the location of Denmark and Sweden. The following week's session, they all received a colored map of Europe, and they were glad to see the different sizes of each country.

Attention to Picture Book Illustrations. Some of the dialogue among the parents was based on certain parts of the text. For example, I only read certain parts aloud from the picture book used during our first session, so as to focus on one of the story's theme. I did not want to read the entire section of the story, as I wanted them to use the illustrations with some text to allow space and time for them to ask questions and make inferences about the story's theme. In this children's book, there is a suspenseful part in the story, and I noticed that after viewing the related illustrations, all six parents asked several questions and became engaged in the book's theme of the Holocaust as follows:

RT: What do you notice in the picture? Tell me, what do you see?

Ann: The girl saw soldiers, Nazis, knocking on the door.

Naty: They were looking for Jews and we don't know for what?

Ale: What were they looking for?

Bren: It looks like the soldiers are mad.

Ann: Why would they, the dad, protect the Jews from the soldiers?

Roxy: The Jews were being taken.

RT: Look again at the picture. What do you think about this picture of the soldier? What is your opinion about this picture of the soldier?

Mari: Racism

Angie: I think aggression? He is already pointing the gun to shoot. How did they distinguish them from the Jews from those people?

RT: Very good question. What do you all think?

Roxy: Is it because of the way they dress?

Ale: Or because they are foreigners? Or they talk different?

RT: (looking at Ann and Mari) Anyone else?
Ann: If it's a small town, everyone knows everyone.

Angie: I would like to know how it all started, like why did the Nazis act this way? The picture shows they're mad, but it doesn't tell us why.

Mari: Can I see the next picture?

RT: (turning page) Sure, what do you all see?

Mari: It looks different.

Naty: It looks like the Nazis left and the Jews are safe.

Roxy: What happened to the Jews?

This excerpt provided parents with background information so that they could better understand the time period as well the events that took place during the Holocaust. Through analyzing illustrations, the group asked unsolicited questions which demonstrated text engagement. For example, Ale's question led Angie to ask a follow-up question, which encouraged the rest of the group to give their input. When Mari stated that the Nazi soldier represented "racism," that response drew Angie in and prompted her to ask another question.

The group's questions and responses fomented curiosity, which was demonstrated when Mari inquisitively asked to view the next illustration on the following page. The use of illustrations, seemed to stimulate visualization, and prompted unanticipated inferences as described in the next section.

It was only after reading my journal that I noticed the way the illustrations assisted some of the parents to create inferences, as well as increase their text engagement levels. On October 20, 2016, I wrote, "I was surprised [at] how the group's questions led to inferences just by looking at the illustrations. Their dialogue made it clear to me as to how important illustrations [can be to] help the group make inferences." As previously noted, when parents constructed inferences, their text engagement level increased.

The following excerpt demonstrates the quick back-and-forth nature of the discussions around the picture book illustrations that spurred inferencing, such as the depiction of the main character's actions during a suspenseful moment. For example, the main character appears to be nervous and is urgently running to return home and warn the family of the approaching Nazi soldiers. From these three pages of illustrations, the group inferred that the presence of the Nazi soldiers walking towards the main character's home meant that the main character felt desperate and full of fear, even though the text itself did not mention how she felt. Rather, they made their inferences regarding the mood at this point solely based on how the illustrator drew the main character's facial expression, after which they felt empathy for the protagonist's desperation. Another example relates to illustrations depicting the main character's physical actions, as she appears to be using her hand and tapping her front door. The accompanying text mentions that she knocks in a certain manner. From this illustration and limited text, Ann described how it was a cue or secret code to notify the family of the upcoming danger. The following discussion

serves as an example of how the parents used the illustrations to support their inferences as they

engaged with the text and one another.

RT: (pausing after reading from the book) Why do you all think she went through the alley rapidly to her house and tried to avoid the soldiers?

Ale: So that they wouldn't see her.

Naty: So that they wouldn't ask her questions? What would [they] do to her?

Roxy: To get home quickly to alert her mom they are on their way.

Bren: Look at her face. She looks desperate.

RT: Imagine if you it was you. How would you feel?

Mari: I would feel so scared.

Roxy: I don't know if I could do it.

Angie: It's horrible how a little girl needs to run back in danger.

Ann: This really looks scary. It's life or death.

Naty: She needs to save the family and is risking her life.

RT: (reading from the book) The next page says, "Momma, Papa the soldiers are coming to our house! They didn't answer me? No one was home? I tapped three times on the cellar door.

Ann: (abruptly) That's their cue!

RT: What do you mean?

Ann: It's how they communicate.

Angie: Like a look or a sound.

Ale: Oh my god! It could be a trick, maybe?

Roxy: What if they get her?

RT: Like whom?

Roxy: Like the soldiers.

Ale: (wide-eyed) Yes, like the Nazis!

Mari: Her face looks worse, like really bad.

Throughout this discussion, parents looked closely at the character's features as the illustrations provided rich details to support the text. As previously mentioned, their inferences resulted after forming questions and looking closely at the illustrations. For example, when Mari points out the arrival of the Nazi soldiers, she infers that there is grave danger, especially for the main character. Her analysis of the protagonist's face also allowed her to draw inferences about the severity of the moment in the story, thereby triggering other parents to ask more questions. Through a combination of questioning the text and carefully analyzing the illustrations, parents were absorbed and fully engaged throughout the discussion.

Written and artistic experiences. Once I finished reading the picture book, the parents demonstrated a different type of text engagement while completing the written activity referred to as an Exit Slip (Fisher & Frey, 2004). The goal of the graphic organizer in this Book Club was to have the parents write a question related to the story, as well as record their learning about the text or the information in the visual narrative of the illustrations.

The exit slip also served as reflection piece since it gave parents an opportunity to express how they felt about our first session. For example, I explained that they could write about something they learned from the story and/or they could give their opinions about our first session. Their responses provided specific feedback on the story/book and their feeling during this meeting. The common words or statements that parents wrote on their exit slips included:

(1) Enjoying the story, brave girl (Character/Protagonist)

(2) The story was sad, but with hope (Holocaust/Story Topic)

(3) Feeling nervous in book club (Self-awareness)

(4) Want to learn more about the Holocaust (Interest, Motivation, and Inquiry)

Based on this and other information parents provided in the exits slips, I came to realize that three of the seven parents – Ann, Ale, and Angie – previously participated in past book clubs; whereas, the other four parents – Roxy, Bren, Naty, and Mari – were totally new to the concept of a book club. This might explain why they appeared nervous during the first session as they were a bit quieter compared to Ann, Ale, and Angie. Two parents, Ale and Roxy, surprised me as they remembered to request that I provide the group with a map of Europe, so that they could see the location of the countries mentioned in the text. Although writing was a difficult skill for some of the parents, it did allow them to demonstrate their continued and deepening interest in the focal picture book and subsequently in the focal chapter book. In my journal I indicated, "I underestimated some of the parents' writing ability. This is an area that I would focus on for future research; however, I am glad that they were receptive and, with great effort, tried something new."

Peer Support and Collaboration. As a teacher, I know the importance of having students working together, especially during hands-on activities, and so the parents in this study had the opportunity to complete a group reading activity. The following excerpt provides a glimpse into how parents helped each other – specifically, when one did not feel capable of carrying out an activity. Here, Mari could not think of what to do to complete the written task and she felt quite uncomfortable. Ale voluntarily asked Mari to help her by working together to complete the written activity.

Mari: (soft voice) It's not that I don't like to draw, it's that I don't know how to draw.

RT: It's okay, you can help Ale or Roxy if you want. See what they are doing. Just remember to visualize the part of the text you are thinking of using. Then write what it means to you.

Ale: (smiling) Help me, Mari. Help me with, you know what, putting down the words.

Mari: (apprehensive) Like what?

Ale: (smiling) Remember the part in the woods? The night time, the basket?

Mari: Yes, I liked that part.

Ale: Write some words that you remember or a sentence and I'll draw.

Mari: (smiles) Okay.

RT: Thank you, Ale, for including Mari. This sometimes happens in the classroom. So, the teacher could give the student another way to participate. What is your opinion?

Naty: What was the question?

RT: How does a teacher grade this type of assignment? What if the student does not like to draw? What do you think the teacher would suggest?

Angie: (answered quickly, impatient) Well, they should write instead.

RT: Bren, what do you think?

Bren: Yes, I'll write. I don't think my drawing is good. (smiles)
RT: As a teacher, I would give a participation grade and ask them to explain the words or symbols they drew . . . or more like a conference, a talk to gain more information.

Ann: It doesn't have to be perfect, just something. Whatever you like.

RT: How can you apply this sketching with your children?

Ale: Well, looking up more information about the book in the Internet. I don't know how to say it, but get more involved with them. Because when I read the story, I felt as if I was in the story.

Roxy: This is fun and really easy.

RT: Anyone else?

Ann: Well, you can explain to your children what they liked and have them draw to understand it better. Maybe she already does it.

Ale: My daughter's teacher has them drawing the characters and writing about them.

Naty: Well, when I was reading the book I would talk about it to her [referring to her daughter], and tell her, "Look, isn't this awful?" or "Look, how ugly this is."

RT: How ugly? What do you mean?

Naty: The ugliness of the war? The Nazis?

Mari: I don't like to draw, but my daughter does so she can do the hard work and I'll write.

Unknowingly, Ale became a tutor and Mari a tutee, as they collaborated, and ultimately completed the activity effectively. As such, Ale provided the necessary guidance, scaffolding the information and differentiating the activity so that Mari was able complete the same activity in a different manner. The process of instructional guidance that transpired between Ale and Mari was observed by the other parents working independently. I noted in my journal how the parents worked together: "This discussion was amazing. The parents were helping each other as if they had worked together before . . . I saw how my brief guided instruction developed social interactions; this connects to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development." I was very pleased that they completed the activity.

Parents enjoyed working collectively using the group writing or drawing activities provided, such as the Exit Slips, Stretch to Sketch, and the Close Read. I recorded in my reflective journal:

Seeing the group trying the writing activities gives me a sense of gratification as they gave effort in trying something new. Seeing them collaborate with each other as they worked on the completion of the activities informed me that, given the opportunity,

parents do want to experience literacy skills and are willing to be part of a learning community.

These short activities seemed to motivate parents to try out literacy strategies similar to those used by their own children in their respective classrooms as evidenced in another excerpt from a mini-Close Read lesson, during which Ale and Mari again demonstrated a strong sense of collaborative active involvement. First, I explained that I would read only two specific pages aloud from the text, and then the group would discuss how the author used words to describe the setting. During the discussion, I noticed the group selected the same words that the author used to describe the setting, and then explained that they would repeat the same process, but with two new pages from a different chapter. This time, the focus was on identifying words that described the mood of the story.

RT: Ok, I see that you all look like you're done. Go ahead, Bren.

Bren: Slammed, tense, recurring nightmare, pounding, unusual, guns, helmets, harshly, directing, brave, firm voice, swift, slapped, odd, fist, demanded, stiffen.

RT: This activity is to read carefully certain parts of the text to find, in this case, key words that can describe the characters and/or the setting; words that stand-out.

Mari: (nodding head) I have the same words, most of them, not many.

RT: Awesome. How about you, Ale?

Ale: (apprehensive) I put fewer words.

RT: Don't worry.

Ale: My words are nightmare, normal, tranquil, sadness, brave, energy, and dangerous.

RT: Roxy?

Roxy: Alert, nightmare, customs, certainty, condescending, habits, and stupid.

RT: Mari?

Ale: You can add some of mine, here.

Mari: (smiling) Okay, I'm adding more: startled, slammed, pounding, pushed, leaned, of the boots, the guns of the helmets, condescending, the fists, swift motion, slammed, and stiffened.

RT: Awesome, very good. Ale, I like how you helped Mari with some words that you were able to find. It's always good to help each other out.

Ale: Thank you, and I noticed that most of us have similar words.

The text engagement and collaboration was a dynamic piece that exhibited another level of sociocultural interaction. For example, I felt they were building on to their word knowledge as Angie translated some of the words from Spanish to English and others mentioned how some of the words sound similar. Working together demonstrated another level of textual engagement as they learned from each other and were able to successfully complete the activities.

Friendly parent debate and banter. The group discussed a section of the text on the topic of religion. Being a sensitive subject, I noticed how four of the seven parents stayed quiet, even though they remained focused on the text and listened attentively. Ann and Angie were extremely engaged in this discussion in an amicable manner. At this point, it appeared that both were, in a way, trying to convince the other parents to agree with their points of view. Ann's interpretation of the text was different from that of Angie's, and their brief, friendly debate below provides another example of how parents assumed the role of the "More Knowledgeable Other." In this example, the two women showed the other parents how to find precise information they missed in the text as they went back to the text to justify their viewpoints, which helped the group make their own conclusions in reference to the topic. Such collaboration with the text led the parents to a deeper discussion that resulted in more questions about the text.

Ale: (smiling) I have a question about the beginning of the chapters when the soldiers arrived at the house where that Ellen was staying. Ellen hid her necklace. Why did she do that? What was the point of the necklace?

RT: What is your opinion?

Ale: I don't know?

Ann: (looking at directly at Ale and smiling) That it represented a Jewish religion. That it was a symbol of the Jewish faith. Just like us Catholics have a cross, they have their own symbol as well. It's the Star of David, which I believe all Jewish people carried one.

Angie: (shaking head in disagreement) I don't know about that, all Catholics don't carry a cross.

RT: What do you mean by that Angie?

Angie: The book only mentioned the star on the necklace and it didn't say anything about their religion.

Ann: (smiling and looking for the chapter in the book) Let me see, in the book, in the chapter of the book, it says that they have their New Year that goes with their religion. I can't find the page.

Angie: (smiling) Yes, but it doesn't go into detail, so how would we know that the necklace with the star is their . . . is their Jewish symbol?

Ale: (smiling) Like Ann said, the book said that the Star of David was, like, what they believed in.

RT: Think about the book title.

Ann: *Number the Stars*, the part when they look at the sky

Angie (laughing) Yes, but I'm saying you, they, the book says like they believe, but no religion.

Ann: I know.

RT: That was an interesting question, Ale. Look at this discussion. We could go back to the text to support their opinions, their answers?

Mari: The text does explain to us that other Jews wore that.

Angie: I believe it was a gift from her dad? Correct?

Ann: Like the story tells us, the Star of David symbolizes Jews, which is real, and I believe the author used this knowing it was true information, and that it was a symbol of them and that it was very logical that the Germans were going to discover, based on this, that she was a Jew.

The next excerpt from a different session was also on the topic of religion, and it

specifically related to the book's. Here the group was deeply interested and expressed certain

perspectives on the topic during their dialogue. Again, Ann and Angie functioned as the "More

Knowledgeable Other(s)," as they provided their perspectives, explaining how certain words

helped them gather the necessary textual evidence to try to understand the author's message.

Bren: Where it says something about the Bible? Is it page 131?

RT: (pointing to the section) Yes, here it is. What is your opinion about that section, that part that the author uses?

Angie: It refers itself to the title of the book.

RT: Yes, it is there, the title of the book. What connection does it have? Why does it give that title there?

Ann: (serious look) I imagine it gave that title there because of the situation they were in, maybe to calm them down? Maybe the Jews would ask God for help because we all have a god. Some have different beliefs, but we do have a god. My understanding was, he wasn't reading the Bible; he just opened the book and saw that part or already knew that because the old man was repeating the same words to him. But I imagine he already knew; it's not as if he was reading directly from the Bible.

Mari: Yeah, I see what you are saying, he just opened the book and glanced at it; he wasn't reading it.

This type of text engagement in which Anne and Angie provided their prior knowledge

helped the group's understanding of the book's connection to the title as they gave examples

using their background which emphasized religion. Most importantly, their friendly

discussion/debate created several questions which engaged the group. It was clear that Ann and

Angie's prior knowledge allowed them to take on the role that Vygotsky (1980) refers to as "The

More Knowledgeable Other," and was extremely beneficial as they provided text-related knowledge that, as readers, they believed to be true prior to reading a text (Brody, 2001; Marzano, 2004; Vygotsky, 1980). In this case, using a short piece of text while developing questions to be answered provided assistance for concepts to be introduced throughout the text, as well as aided in building or allowing students to use the necessary knowledge to understand the new text information better and/or scaffold it for their peers (Brody, 2001; Marzano, 2004; Vygotsky, 1980). Using prior knowledge also helped the group to visualize certain sections of the text, which was also a literacy strategy that maintained parents' attention and interest.

Reading and "seeing" the story. One concept I introduced to the Book Club was the literacy strategy of visualization, which is the ability to "paint a picture" of a story using the descriptive words in the text. This strategy helps parents make a solid connection to the text through the use of their own imaginations. I felt it was necessary to do a quick review of the process of visualizing a part of the text from our previous session. After spending about 10-15 minutes on how to visualize the specific part of the reading, we were ready to discuss the assigned chapters and apply the visualization strategy. Parents had read book chapters one through four for this meeting, and during discussion of key points from the readings, Ale visualized a section of one of the chapters. At the time, she did not know that visualization is a type of reading comprehension strategy, and after I briefly explained it, the discussion led to others to express how they visualized certain parts of the chapters. As Ale posed an initial question about a certain part of Chapter One, and I noticed others looking at her attentively as she looked up and around the group, almost as if she was taking on the role of a story teller. As she described her thinking, she moved her hands and made facial expressions, again not realizing that she was thinking aloud and visualizing that part of the text.

Ale: I am not sure, but I wonder if the Jews, at the beginning, could do things without being bothered? The Germans had a lot to do with it and I can see them needing to watch the Jews to see if they would try to escape or do something against the Nazis. I imagine the Jewish people couldn't walk fast or even run like the girls did. Imagine if [I] was Jewish and just jogging in the park or my neighborhood, they would question me and ask me why am I running. Not good, not fair, it's too scary.

RT: Does anyone have a comment about what Ale just shared?

Ale: (smiling) And when they saw the girls running down the street, I felt that they would get in trouble by the Nazi soldiers since there were at almost every corner. Of course, they will question anyone one running especially without a good reason. It's like being controlled.

RT: (smiling) Wow! Thank you, Ale. Yes, what you just did is what students are encouraged to do in the classroom.

Ale: (surprised) Do what?

RT: Students are asked to elaborate on what's going on in the book and try to visualize the story. You gave us great details through your thinking. You were visualizing the story and I think you might have a better understanding of how the tension was during this time period.

Ale: (smiling) Yes, that's true.

RT: Another opinion? Anyone else?

Naty: I also think it was bad that they were not permitted to read newspapers, magazines, or books, or any of that stuff. If they found anything of that type they would burn or rip the items. They were prohibited to do a lot of things. When I read that part, I put myself in the mom's place and I know I would feel scared and very worried every time my kids and husband would leave the house.

Ale: (smiling) Yes, the way the Jewish family had to secretly read certain newspapers was another part [where] I could see how much danger surrounded them, especially when the person would deliver the paper. Poor man, he was probably so afraid.

Mari: The part at the beginning. I also imagine how the girls would see them (Nazi soldiers); they were very surprised to see them. The parents talked to their girls and told them what type of people they (Nazi soldiers) are and what they are capable of doing. It's like the girls were fearful.

Bren: They said they had very shiny boots. Their uniforms and helmets – they were very intimidated by them. If I was her, I would not know what to say, cry maybe.

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Ann: I noticed that ten-year-old girls had a little bit more liberty to wander as they walked home from school. That is why the Nazis were standing at the corner. I imagine there were more soldiers at other corners too.

RT: Can any of you see that specific part of the chapter in your mind? Can you imagine it?

Naty: Yes, I see the ten-year-old girl did not want the little baby girl to tell her mom about how she had talked to them because she was going to worry her mom. Then the mom would be afraid that they would be able to know who to look for and the mom was going to overreact too.

Bren: Yes, I would worry too because they did not know what to expect and were scared.

This excerpt is a strong example of how the parents were able to visualize the text and develop an intense discussion involving the entire group. I felt that Ale had an amazing and unexpected performance in that she spontaneously shared her thoughts by describing the text out loud. The group seemed captivated by her enthusiasm as Roxy, who was sitting next to Ale, smiled and appeared to be entertained as she paid close attention, seeming to sense Ale's energy. Likewise, Roxy's explanation as to why she empathized with the Jewish family was an example of visualizing the text in the group setting.

Summary. There were various indications of textual engagement among the parents in this book club, with high levels of participation during certain points of each session. Parents were able to demonstrate their interest in the text by asking prompted and unprompted questions, which increased their involvement and text engagement. These questions also helped them visualize and debate sections of the texts. The inclusion of writing and drawing activities complimented parent discussions of the texts and allowed for an additional, and expanded form of parent engagement. In the next section of this chapter, I analyze the data related to my second research question, which focuses on parent connections to the text.

Parents Make Text Connections

The analysis in this section focuses on the following research question relating to parent connections to the focal texts: In what ways are Latinx parents able to make connections to text within the America Elementary's Book Club?

Text-to-self connections. Parent dialogue in the Book Club often focused on making text-to-self connections to the focal texts. During these reflective moments, parents were able to think back and recall certain childhood memories. There were different types of text-to-self connections as discussed here.

Childhood memories from Mexico. In one instance, Ale and Ann made an initial connection to a scene in the book *Number the Stars* in which two girls were playing with paper dolls, something that all of the women in the group seemed to be able to relate to. For example, Ale, Naty, and Mari remembered how they played when they were young, and then Roxy and Bren connected to their free time when they actively played with others, running and doing other physical movement. Ann described how even though the young girls in the text were frightened, they found a way to entertain themselves by making paper dolls. Soon after this comment, both Naty and Ale recollected how they also played with paper dolls when they were living in Mexico and were poor.

> Ann: Yes, that's what I'm saying. This part reminds of the games, things I would play with in Mexico as a child. (smiling) We didn't have cell phones to keep us busy.
>
> RT: Can anyone else share?
>
> Angie: The girls in the story are brave. I also think that as you live, you learn to be strong through your experiences. They might play with whatever they have.
>
> Naty: (smiling) I remember making little dolls with yarn, twigs, and leaves. It was fun. It's all we had. We didn't have a lot of money, we were poor.

Ale: We were poor too and my parents couldn't buy dolls, so we used our imagination and made these ugly looking paper dolls, but me and my sisters had fun.

Bren: We would play chasing games.

Roxy: (smiling) I would sing and jump rope.

RT: (looking at Mari) How about you Mari?

Mari: Well, I didn't go outside much, but when I did, I had a doll. I would talk to her and pretend I was her mommy (smiling).

At this point in the discussion, after Mari shared her connection to the text, and I decided

to ask the group how their own children play to determine if their play is similar to how the

parents played as children living in Mexico. The participants all agreed that technology has

definitely changed the way their children play, noting that cell phones and video gaming

consumes most of their children's free time and limits their creativity.

RT: Since you all have commented on how the girls in the story play, even during this difficult period, how do your kids play?

Ann: (laughing) My kids are on their tablet, cellphone, or watching cartoons. I try to keep it to a two-hour time use, but it's hard since I have so much to do and most of the time my husband doesn't help.

Ale: (smiling) My daughter used to play with dolls, but now that she is in fifth grade, she doesn't [play with them anymore], but still has them. She played with her dolls when she was four years old up to eight years old.

Roxy: It's all about technology. My daughter constantly bugs me for installing apps on her phone. (Three parents nod their heads in agreement.)

Bren: (smiling) Yes, me too.

Naty: It's sad how our kids don't play like we did. Not as much creativity.

Here, the group reflected on the notion of child play as evidenced in the focal text and I

saw how the notion of play remains an important value for parents. I also understood how the

group felt about the use of technology being a substitute for play today, as opposed to the ways they played when they were children. As Naty mentioned in a later part of the session:

> As parents, we are sometimes so busy . . . I lose track of time and my children play their video gaming console or use their phone without me realizing how many hours have gone by . . . I get mad at them and they get mad at me because I told them to turn it off. I sometimes get mad at myself for not doing more things with them to keep them busy; it is difficult to balance play time and the use of technology.

It seemed that Naty felt somewhat guilty for not being able to spend more time with her children, so that they would not need to rely on the constant use of electronic devices instead of other forms of play. I think Naty, as well as other parents, may have difficulty trying to set limits on the use of technological devices. The parents seem to continuously strive to find that balance mentioned by Naty that incorporates physical play or creative/imaginative play, such as the example in the text of the girls playing with their paper dolls.

The connections between the text and childhood memories provided insight into the similarities between the parents' childhood experiences, particularly to growing up in Mexico. Additionally, these conversations appeared to be therapeutic since the majority of the participants smiled or laughed as they expressed themselves, as well as reminisced about their past in a calm and relaxed manner, which prompted more dialogue and continued to develop a cohesive group dynamic.

Family traditions and gender roles.

Another parental connection to the book that related to culture, as well as gender roles, was the tradition of family storytelling. Some parents described how their mothers and grandmothers told them Mexican fairytales. The fact that they specifically indicated that a

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female played this role seemed to indicate that this is a tradition that is typically carried on by

mothers – at least for Bren, Ale, and Mari. In the following discussion, the parents compared

themselves Annemarie, which is the book's protagonist. I affirmed their thinking and asked,

"Do any of you remember reading about fairytales when you were kids?" Many parents

responded affirmatively, and the discussion resulted in some of the following statements as

parents shared their memories of oral storytelling:

- Roxy: I like remembering stories from the Bible and then I relate it to things that happened in our family; we talk about it more.

- Naty: I like to compare events like the story of Cinderella and how it could have a bad, mean step-mom. I can say that I had a mean step-mom too, because I feel I did. My daughter knows the story of when I was a child, so yes, I think we can see these similarities and do this together when reading a book.

- Ale: I remember stories with kings and queens, like Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty. I still try to tell stories to my kids. There are also different stories from Mexico that I will have my daughter make connections to.

- Mari: (smiling) My grandmother told me stories of fairytales with scary witches to make sure I would not talk to strangers. I didn't know that making connections is done in the classrooms. I think it's really good to do this.

- Naty: Yes, my mother did that with me and she does it with my daughter . . . told me magical stories about scary people like the Llorona so we would listen to our parents. I think my daughter will remember the story more when we make connections.

At the end of Session Three, the topic of female gender roles came up again, particularly

when Angie made a comment about a specific part of chapter seven where she noticed how the

characters, Annemarie's mom and Uncle Henrik, discuss an issue of housekeeping. In the text,

the mother instructs the uncle to get married so that his wife could clean the house and make

dinner for him. Angie, who was born in the United States, brought up the topic of how women

have the role of homemakers. Her commentary created a connection to the influence that culture

and gender have in our society, and it initiated further discussion by Roxy, Mari, Ale, and Naty,

who give their insights that connected to their own cultural backgrounds, even though they were

different than that of Angie. They all felt that both the husband and the wife could take part in

sharing household responsibilities, stimulating a reflective group discussion about blending past

cultural traditions from Mexico with new ideas brought forth by their lived experiences in the

United States.

> Angie: (looking at the chapter) In chapter seven almost towards the end, it says that Uncle Henrik talked about the news, but the mom, his sister, all she talked about was how much she missed him, how he's not eating well, and how he needs a wife to cook and clean for him. I don't think that might be good.

> Ale: Instead of being his sister, she's acting like a mom telling him what to do.

> RT: Anyone else?

> Ale: (smiling) Oh! I forgot, she asked him that – Why haven't you found yourself a good woman that can keep your house clean?

> Roxy: Well, they were old-fashioned customs. I think now, it's not exactly like that, or maybe it still is in some parts of Mexico.

> Ale: (serious look) It's traditions that they follow, like in my family. It's okay since my husband works all day and I stay home.

> Roxy: Well, like I was saying, we follow them, in the Mexican culture and many other cultures might still do the same. That was the tradition. I also feel that it is my responsibility to clean the house and maintain it, even though the rest may have chores to do. It's still my responsibility to keep the control of how my house is going to be cleaned because I am also a homemaker.

> Mari: I think that's what the lady was trying to tell him, but I also feel that the husband can also help.

> Angie: When I started to read this part, I thought of the girls in the classroom, like my daughter.

> RT: What would you tell your daughter if she asks you if homemakers solely take on the responsibility of primarily cooking and cleaning when they get married?

Angie: Not that there's anything wrong with getting married and cooking, cleaning, and staying home. Times have changed. It's now different, and we are not in Mexico anymore, so women can also work and have the husband help in the house (smiles).

Ale: My family in Mexico follows the same traditions for women. The women are okay with it. It's like just normal and okay.

Angie: Yes, like I work part-time and still do things at home, but my husband doesn't expect me to have it nice and clean all the time.

Roxy: True, but we can change it since we have more options here in the States.

RT: Mari, you look like you want to say something.

Mari: I think I will tell my daughter that you don't need to marry just to take care of your husband. I would tell the same to my son, that he shouldn't marry so his wife can take care of him.

Ale: (smiling) I would like my son to marry a good wife and cook good food.

Naty: (nodding head in agreement) The sister in the book, was just saying those things because it's part of their culture and it's something she does for her husband, so she means well. All mothers want their sons to marry a good girl that will treat them good too.

After this session, I wrote in my journal:

It is very interesting how the role of women, according to the participants, has

connections to their culture and the expectations of being more responsible in

maintaining the needs of the family and the home. I can understand how these

expectations were instilled in them from their female role models. I can connect to this

because I remember how my mother stayed home until I started elementary school and

she began working in a factory.

This discussion demonstrated how the book helped elicit connections of culture and

traditions. It also stimulated their thinking about their own views on gender roles living in the

United States, as well as those they hope their children have.

In Session Four, another discussion ensued in which participants described how they, as mothers, play an important role in their children's education. It started in response to a discussion of a complex, cultural/traditional part in the book. Specifically, it touched on the role of women, which was embedded during a discussion between the characters Annemarie and her mother. This, in turn, led Bren to make a connection to how she takes her daughter to the library and how the girl sometimes selects books that are too difficult to understand (like this section in the group's focal text). Next, Angie noted that she felt that it was her responsibility as a woman to take her daughter to the library and check out books, after which she, Roxy and Mari extended Bren's initial connection by referring to the idea of how mothers do more than others regarding their children's education. This dialog provided insights into how their perceptions of gender roles influenced their own connections to and understanding of the focal text.

Bren: Is it good to have my daughter read books that are for older grades?

RT: To answer your question, Bren, I remember when I taught third grade and some of my students selected books that were too difficult for their reading level. I had a feeling that most likely they would have a difficult time understanding the story. When I asked them to explain why they selected that specific book, some said that they liked the pictures, drawings, or because they saw the movie.

Bren: This reminds me of when I took my son to the library and he took a book that was too hard, too long, but he liked the pictures, so he took it. He didn't know what the story was about.

Roxy: (nodding in agreement) But it is complicated for them to pick a book. Like my daughter wants to read mature novels because of the cover of the book.

RT: What do you tell her?

Roxy: (smiling) I tell her to pick another book.

RT: Who else takes their children to the library?

Angie: (proud smile) I'm the mom, so I take them to the library.

Ale: (nodding in agreement and smiling) Me too, I'm the one that takes my daughter to the library.

Mari: Yes, it's my job to help with homework and take them to the library.

Roxy: I wish my husband would take them, but he comes home tired.

RT: Does anyone feel like Roxy?

Angie: I feel that I have more time and it's something good for my kids.

Roxy: Yes.

Mari: We do more with our kids; it's just how it is.

Religion and Mexican traditional wakes.

The section of the text discussed above also started another type of text-to-self connection, particularly during the Danish wake ceremony held for the supposedly deceased aunt in the family's cabin. At this point, Ale remembered how she attended a wake in Mexico and how it was similar to the text, describing how she felt as a child at the wake. Others chimed in with their own feelings as well, and it was interesting to discover similar wake traditions between the Danish and Mexican cultures. Portions of this discussion illustrate these connections.

RT: In chapter eight, almost at the end of the chapter, I noticed that they spoke about what customs they had for the funeral, the wake. What do you all think about that part from the chapter?

Ale: (looking and reading chapter eight) It says [that] it is the old custom, you know, for the dead to rest at home and their loved ones to be with them before burial. I can understand this since I went through this when I was a little girl living in Mexico.

Angie: I remember in Mexico I went to a wake at the family's home and people, friends, family went and they also brought food.

RT: Anyone else?

Naty: I remember something similar. When I was a little girl, around seven years old, there were people in the living room praying around the dead person; it was my great grandmother. Seeing her in the coffin, I was frightened and felt like I was in a strange

place. Too scared, and seeing and hearing my mother cry was too sad, so I went to the kitchen and stayed there until it was time to go home.

Ann: There were also places like here in the United States where people go to a funeral home for the wake.

Ale: (Smiling) Yes, but you have to have money.

Ann: That's true, it's expensive.

Ale: Well, I was small and I don't remember all the details. I believe it was one of my grandmother's aunts, so I didn't even know the person who died. I think I was like five years old.

RT: How did you feel?

Ale: I was so bored and also, I do remember being scared. The body was in a dark bedroom with candles. I was very scared, so I don't have anything positive to say about that event.

RT: Does anyone else have a connection?

Roxy: I do! When I was little, I didn't understand what the difference was between a funeral and a wake. The wake used to be something very ugly and I did not like it. I only liked it when I was with my cousins. But when they sat us down we had to be quiet and pray. Well, I did not like that and it was boring.

RT: (noticing Ale reading the text) Ale, did you find something in chapter eight?

Ale: (laughing) Yes, it says that he had the Bible and the man read parts of it and the mom was pretending to pray.

Naty: I imagine that the funeral or wake was for something else because the person that died was not well known, Aunt Vick. I have doubts about anyone being in that coffin.

RT: Okay, anyone else?

Bren: Because the girl, Annemarie, says she doesn't remember that family member and that person that passed away. In reality, we never take kids into account, and even now when there is a funeral, the adults are the ones that are going back and forth and the kids are running around.

The connections made by Naty, Angie, and Ale stimulated the rest of the group to refer to the specific page and section of the focal text. Going back to the text to make their connections

was effective as they recollected and discussed their past wake experiences when living in Mexico. During this discussion of Mexican wakes, I noticed some participants became a bit quieter, especially after Naty shared. It is possible that for some of the parents, these connections might have triggered personal emotions as they remembered the past, which better enabled them to visualize themselves as children, recalling their wake experience in Mexico. This discussion may have also brought forth some feelings of sadness due to those memories of fear and/or confusion.

Text-to-world connections. Parents used prior knowledge to make connections from the focal text to current events in their world in a way that scaffolded the connections. In other words, each initial connection seemed to serve as a scaffold, which led other participants to have their own thoughts and connections.

Politics. In the excerpt below, Ann made a text-to-world connection that sparked a discussion of politics. Her connection related to the topic of how Nazi soldiers gathered up Jews which led to some being killed. Although the picture book I used during session one did not reference death or killing, Ann used her prior knowledge to infer what the Nazis were doing to the Jews. This sparked up a lively discussion that serves as an excellent example of how her prior knowledge created a sort of scaffolding process for the rest of the group, upon which they began to develop or build on to their background knowledge. The excerpt begins with Ann's connection, which unfolded Ale's connection to, at the time, the United States presidential campaign. Ale's compared the Jews to illegal immigrants, which led others to share their views on Donald Trump's campaign ideas.

> Ann: I think this story or this topic is a true story that already happened in another country. I don't know the story well, but Nazis would not only take the Jews prisoners; they would kill them. I imagined they based this story on a similar event.

Naty: The government against a group of people.

RT: Anyone else?

Naty: (curious expression) I can see what Ann says about this happening in another country, but I feel it still happens now, here in the United States.

RT: Mari, Bren, Roxy – what do you think about what Naty just said?

Bren: Well, like undocumented or illegals, they are discriminated against.

Roxy: But they aren't killed. They are grouped together and returned back to Mexico.

Bren: Or wherever they came from.

Mari: I think racism still exists. I just didn't know how bad it was for the Jews.

Ale: (appearing in deep thought) I think immigration in a way is like the Nazis.

RT: Can you explain a little more?

Ale: Well, the "Migra" (Immigration Border Control Agency) takes the illegal immigrants and they do treat them bad and send them back to Mexico.

Ann: Yes, in a way I see that, and look at what Trump says about the border. He wants to build a big wall. (smiles)

RT: Interesting. Anyone else?

Naty: Well, yes, Trump says things that scare me and maybe some of us.

Ale: Almost like the Jews, maybe not as severe.

RT: (looking at Angie) Interesting. Angie?

Angie: It's sad how this guy (referring to Trump) is talking about things that worry some of us and break up families, like that picture. (points to illustration on the page)

The illustration to which Angie was referring detailed the scared faces of Jewish families

as they were gathered and separated from their children. During the first Book Club session, the

parents connected illegal border crossing from Mexico into the United States to the Holocaust

and the persecution of the Jews, and occurred in response to my question: "Why do you think the

character Annette said, 'We have new visitors' then the baker gave her extra bread?"

       Ale: I think the baker already knew what it meant, "We have new visitors."

       Bren: I think it was like a code. So that they don't have to say they have Jewish people hiding.

       Ale: Like being illegal, illegal people. You need sometimes, need to be careful not to get in trouble, like the police, or you'll need to hide.

       RT: Can you explain a little more?

       Ale: Well, for example, there are people from Mexico--immigrants. They cross over to California, the border, and maybe they get into some trouble and they could end being deported.

       RT: Can anyone else elaborate?

       Angie: It's not something you talk about. It's personal, but I have friends and family that are not supposed to be here. In the text, the Nazis feel the Jews don't belong there.

       Ale: They are, I guess, illegal too.

       Roxy: Yes, they know the risk, so they have family, friends, usually family, help them, like give them a place to live and find a job.

       RT: I notice you are comparing the text to undocumented immigrants.

The excerpt above demonstrated how Angie, Ale, and Roxy made the focal text

connection of the Nazis and Jews to the United States and Mexican immigrants. Angie, Ale, and

Roxy specifically connected a part of the focal text to undocumented Mexican immigrants in fear

of being stopped or detained by police, thus resulting in the need to hide. Ale changed the topic

and shared how she likes to compare things. It was likely that she and possibly others did not

want to continue discussing this topic any longer, and served as a convenient transition to discuss

another form of text-to-world connections as follows:

Ale: (chuckling) It fits me well. I always compare things to what I do or went through with things I read and things on TV too.

Bren: I do that too.

RT: Can anyone else share?

Naty: My daughter sometimes asks if some things have happened to me when I was her age.

RT: Why do you think?

Naty: To compare it to herself.

Angie: (smiling) Yeah, it's interesting when my daughter asks me for stuff I did in the past when I was growing up in Mexico.

RT: Is it about what she reads, about stories or books?

Mari: Sometimes, but more about things that happen in her grade or with friends.

Roxy: Me too! I never thought I could do something like this, something we do with a story.

Naty: I like this, it's a good idea.

Mari: (nodding head) Yeah, me too, my daughter can do this.

The themes the parents shared in the excerpt above were unexpected and after Angie

gave her input, the other parents appeared to be relieved, which I interpreted to mean that they

also knew and empathized with undocumented immigrants from Mexico or other Latin American

countries. At the same time, I felt that they did not want to share further information on this

topic. In my journal, I noted that the parents themselves could be undocumented as well, but that

I could not make such an assumption, and did not want to ask such a personal question. Ale

quickly swayed the conversation to the way she, as well their children, can and should make

associations to texts. These associations present examples of how parents, such as Ale, were

able to make connections with the text based on their life experiences and world events from the past or present time.

Media. Toward the end of the first session, Angie and Naty made interesting text connections by linking their prior knowledge of TV shows and movies to themes in the picture book. It seemed to be an easy comparison, as parents noted it quickly and evidenced curiosity about the topic, with two even expressing a desire to view the movie referenced. I explained that *Number the Stars* was set in Denmark and that the Jewish family escaped to Sweden. In addition, I explained why I purposely selected two focal texts, the short children's picture book and a second chapter book for the Book Club because they have similar themes and, coincidently, both have a Denmark and Sweden connection. I felt the group initially needed to get a feel for the texts by using only specific parts of the picture book as an introduction to the themes and topics.

> Angie: On the Discovery Channel on history, they talked about very old people that survived the Holocaust and interviewed them. The only thing that was very sad to me was that they interviewed a very old woman. She said how she still remembers what the smell was like when they burned people.

> Ale: (curious look, eyes squinting) Discovery Channel? In English, of course. Right?

> Angie: Well, yes. It's similar to the book you just read. (looking directly at me)

> Naty: There is also the movie "Life is Beautiful (La Vida es Bella)" about a boy that survives the Holocaust.

> RT: I believe the movie takes place in Italy? Right?

> Naty: Um... I believe you are right. Yes, it was Italy I believe. It's a really good movie for all of us to see what happened during the Holocaust.

> RT: Anyone else?

> Bren: It might be interesting to see how the book that you just read is similar to the movie, I mean, if they have already made a movie of the book.

Ann: The book might be better.

Mari: I also would like to compare it.

At another point, the parents referenced the book, *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, written by Anne Frank (1952), as well as the movie of the same title. Angie and Roxy briefly commented on the book and movie and connected it to the focal book, *Number the Stars,* emphasizing the hardships the Jewish people experienced during the Holocaust.

Roxy: The story is so sad and it's hard to understand why the Nazis were doing this to the Jews.

Angie: The story is like Anna Frank. I mean, Anne Frank.

RT: Can you talk a little bit more about this?

Angie: It was basically the same. The girl in the story, Anne Frank, would have to hide so that the Nazis would not find her. She lost all her family and she was left all alone. So other people would help her by hiding her and they would contact other people to help her and they would talk in code.

Roxy: Yes, I remember the movie about that girl hiding in a secret room. I think she died hiding.

RT: Anyone else would like to share?

Angie: It was similar events, but the story was more about the way the girl hid from the Nazis and this story that we are reading is more about hiding a family.

Roxy: The movie was sad because she saw how the Nazis were hunting all the Jews.

Bren: Do you know if the book is also in Spanish?

Angie: I'm pretty sure it is. It is a popular book, at least when I was in school; I had to read it.

Roxy: I wonder how many more books have been written about the Holocaust.

Bren: Or how many movies have been made.

Ale: I think it's good to compare similar books to the movies because it can tell us different versions.

Although this was a brief excerpt, there is evidence to suggest that parents can make connections to the focal text. I specifically noticed how Angie's prior knowledge and reading of *Anne Frank* resulted in a connection to *Number the Stars*. After this session, I noted in my journal that Angie attended grades one through twelve in the United States, which made me wonder if she may have read or seen the movie, which resulted in this text-to-text connection. I also noted how Roxy added her opinions first and that later in the discussion, Bren and Ale offered ideas and expressed the desire to learn more about the Holocaust, whether through books or by movies.

Summary. There was at least one connection that parents were able to make to the two texts, *The Whispering Town* and *Number the Stars*, during each Book Club session. These connections ranged across a variety of themes and topics and were generally unexpected for me. It was interesting to see how parents recalled certain childhood memories from their own Mexican culture. These special cultural childhood recollections facilitated connections to the texts, as did current political issues in the United States, such as immigration. In fact, immigration-related responses provided deep insights to the parents' views and concerns for the unknown decisions that the government may implement. Parents' text-to-text and text-to-movie connections displayed their background knowledge, while also encouraging them to learn from one another. Even though the text is based on historical events that Jewish people experienced during the Holocaust, these parents were still able to find ways to make connections to them based on their Mexican American background.

I reflected in my journal after each Book Club session, and I felt that some of the parents may have had questions about when to utilize certain reading strategies. I was also pleased to see how Ale and Roxy asked some questions on making connections for clarification purposes, seemingly due to their interest in learning more about the reading process and how they could work with their children as they read at home. The following section highlights key reading strategies that parents utilized during the Book Club sessions.

Parents Reported New Learning

The analysis in the next section focuses on the following research question relating to parent understanding of new ways to read books: What do Latinx parents report as new learning as a result of their interactions with the focal texts and other participants in America's Book Club experience? The section provides descriptions of key areas of parent literacy learning during the study in a chronological manner, together with the specific literacy activities and Book Club sessions during which these occurred (see Table 4). Parents' reports of literacy activities they would try out or discuss with their children are also highlighted. Certain activities were planned for specific sessions; however, there was also evidence they occurred across more than one session based on parents' dialogue and questions, and these are indicated with an asterisk (*).

Table 4

Reading activities by session

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5
Visualization*	Similes	Making Connections	Mini Close Read	Visualization
Exit Slip	Making Connections*		Sticky Notes*	Sketch-to- Stretch
			Making Connections*	

In the following sections, I discuss the planned and unplanned ways parents used reading strategies introduced at some point during the study for comprehension. Given that they were very eager to experience what their children learn and practice in reading classrooms, this enthusiasm was an intrinsic motivator for them to learn these strategies, as well as to read the focal texts with deeper understanding. The knowledge of these reading activities seemed to also encourage parents to take part in their child's reading at home as outlined here.

Session One: Exit Slip. Towards the end of the first session, I explained how teachers use an Exit Slip as a reading comprehension tool after an activity or lesson. Even though it was close to the end of our one-hour session, I felt that I needed to model how to use an Exit Slip with the picture book I read aloud at the beginning of the session. Thus, I demonstrated how to develop and write a question about the text and write something that was learned. When the parents did not raise any questions as to how to use/write an Exit Slip, I reiterated that they could write a question and indicate what they learned. Due to lack of time, I suggested that they could respond to only one of the two prompts if desired. In addition, I encouraged them to write either in Spanish or English so that they could feel comfortable providing a written response. Finally, I reminded them to try to follow what I previously modeled with that specific text.

Interestingly, the parents did not have any questions at this time as they wrote about something they learned, although I noticed it did seem to take longer than anticipated for completion of these written responses. In the transcript of this discussion below, Naty mentions how the group used the Exit Slip. Afterwards, I reflected in my journal about how the group was able to understand the benefits of an Exit Slip, and how it can help them better understand the text. This brief excerpt provides the context of how the Exit Slip discussion began and how the parents demonstrated understanding of what they needed to write.

> RT: I have something for all of you. It's a form that I give to my students called an "Exit Slip" . . . *an organizador gráfico* . . . to be able to record a short summary of what you learned or to ask a question. In this case, if you see the boxes [on the Exit Slip], we have it in Spanish and in English. One box indicates to write about something we learned today and the other indicates something I'm confused about. You put the information inside each box.
>
> Ale: So, we write about both? We write it in the boxes? Can I write what I thought about the book? My opinion too?
>
> RT: (nodding head in agreement) Yes. How did you feel in this session? Don't think you have to write a lot.
>
> Roxy: (cautious) So is it okay to just write about what I learned? The hour is almost up and I have a lot to do at home today.
>
> Naty: Me too, so I will just put what I learned and write it in Spanish.
>
> Ann: I'm going to practice my English. Is it okay that I misspell some words?
>
> Ale: (smiling) Can we write it in both?
>
> RT: Yes, no worries. You can also respond to one of the two. This can help the reader reflect on what, in this case, what you read.

Some of the group's responses in the "What you learned" section included: new words and translations of words from Spanish to English or vice versa, new information about the Holocaust, and a request to have information about the geography of the countries referenced in

the text, as well as other countries affected by the Holocaust. The parents also noted that they would like to complete this activity with their children, but as a discussion with written responses. When Roxy shared that she would much rather discuss what she learned or what she felt was important, I noticed that Bren, Ann, Ale, Mari stopped writing and began to dialogue about what they learned that day. In addition, when Roxy mentioned that she was pressed for time and planned to respond only with what she learned, the others also followed suit. Perhaps if we had more time, they might have been able to ask a question in the space provided on the Exit Slip. Naty, and Angie, and Ann wrote the most on their Exit Slips, and were also the three that indicated they would prefer to discuss the ideas with their children, calling it "sort of like a verbal Exit Slip," which suggests that they may actually use this strategy with their children at home.

Session Two: Similes. In Session Two, the parents focused on chapters one through three and analyzed the characters in the story. For example, Ale, Ann, and Mari shared their thoughts about how one of characters might have felt in the story, specifically, the Jewish mother. They felt empathy for the character, as evidenced when Ale made a comment comparing the Jewish mother's feelings of sadness to drops of rain. At this point, I explained how similes are words that are used in figurative language to help create a stronger visualization of the text. Parents understood the use of words "like" and "as" to compare two things. Ale, Roxy, and Naty were enthused to learn this new information, quickly giving examples by making up their own similes. The rest of the group acknowledged this information by nodding their heads in agreement, noting that they would discuss how similes play an important role when reading with their children.

RT: Can anyone tell me how the mom might feel?

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Ale: Well, the mom was crying. Her tears were like the rain, and it made it seem as if the whole world was crying like a sad child. That's what I felt when I read it.

Ann: I felt sad that the rain is like her tears.

RT: Anyone else?

Mari: The mom is feeling terrible. The situation is terrible.

Roxy: The rain and her tears describe the mother's feelings.

RT: Why do you think that?

Mari: To give an example of her great pain.

Ann: It could have said "the mom felt sad and was crying," but it's more than that.

Mari: Yes, it's something bigger, more dramatic.

RT: That is an example of a simile. When you use the words "like" or "as" to compare two things, it's called a simile. What do you think about the author using this simile?

Ale: The mom crying like the rain; that's a simile. It makes me feel her emotion.

Roxy: It gives you more details.

RT: The text uses similes to help the reader understand the story, and in this case, to help us try to feel the mother's sadness. This is an example of what is called figurative language. Any comments?

Naty: (excited, then hesitant) We often have these comparisons a lot in poems, in Spanish poems, like my heart is…um…um…

Roxy: (smiling) Like, my heart is like a rock because he left me? My love is like the sun.

Ale: (smiling and laughing) Oh wow! That's very good.

Angie: Children need to have more of these kinds of words to compare things.

Ann: I see this in soap operas, especially the ones with love and romance.

Ale: (smiling) Yes, that's right. Also in poems or songs.

Naty: My daughter can do this and I'll show her, too, because it helps to see that part of the story better.

Angie: (smiling) The soap operas?

Naty: (smiling and chuckling) No, in books like the one we are reading.

RT: Anyone else?

Angie: Yes, I think I'll be asking my daughter to give or find a simile in the chapter as this helps with the details.

RT: How about you, Bren?

Bren: My daughter needs to do this too, and I think it's easy. It sounds easy to compare two things.

The parents learned how a figure of speech, such as a simile, can serve as a literary device and how it enhances the story. It was remarkable to see how they began providing impromptu examples of their own or from television shows and making connections to similes being used in Spanish language poems. They were totally immersed in the discussion and enthused by their learning. In my journal, I noted that there was a point where the group expanded on the use of similes:

> After Roxy gave her short example of a simile, it was nice to see how Ale complimented
>
> her in a friendly, humorous manner where they both laughed a bit. I could tell others
>
> enjoyed this part because they were all smiling. Ann and Ale followed up, commenting
>
> on how soap operas, poems, and songs use similes; this was amazing to witness.

I realized that they felt very comfortable identifying similes and understanding how they impact the characters in a story. Also, the parents indicated that they would utilize this figure of speech with their children.

Session Three: Connections. During Session Three, I decided to explicitly emphasize the importance of making connections during reading instruction because this was starting to present itself in the discussions that occurred in Session Two. I felt that parents needed to understand how reading teachers instruct students to make connections so as to be able more deeply analyze the text. Even though the parents were making connections prior to this session, I felt this was an opportunity to emphasize how they can read a book and make connections to self, to other texts, and to the world. It was a teachable moment that allowed me to highlight how they can also do this with their children and have meaningful discussions around books. As the parents discussed the concept of making connections and how it works, they easily transitioned from their own connections to how they could promote this for their children as evidenced in this transcript.

> Naty: (questioning look) So that at the same time, they can be writing something that they found interesting in the book.

> Mari: Or they can compare themselves to the text.

> RT: Yes, they might understand how it is similar to something that happened to them and similar to the character.

> Bren: They see the characters and understand how it is may be similar.

> RT: Yes. For example, sometimes students themselves will say, "Oh, this reminds me of . . . " and then they make their connection to the text. In one of the chapters, there was a part where the girls told or made up a fairytale. Do any of you remember reading fairytales when you were kids?

> Bren: Yes, and I still tell them fairytales, especially to my little one, but my daughter, she's older, so not as much. My mom told us stories too. Sometimes those stories were also read in my elementary school, like fables.

> Roxy: I like remembering stories from the Bible and then I relate it to things that happen in our family. We talk about it more.

RT: Do any of you think you can do this "making connections" activity with your children?

Naty: Well, I like to compare events or characters, like the story of Cinderella, and how it could be a bad, mean stepmom. I can say that I had a mean stepmom too, because I do feel I did. My daughter knows the story, so yes, I think we can do this together when reading a book.

Ale: I still try to tell stories to my kids. There are also different stories from Mexico that I will have my daughter make connections to.

Bren: (smiling) Yes, it's interesting. I can try this too.

RT: Did you all know that reading teachers ask students to make connections? This is what we have been doing when we remember other similar events or things with the text. Anyone else?

Mari: (smiling) My grandmother used to tell me stories of fairytales with scary witches to make sure I would not talk to strangers. I didn't know that making connections is done in the classrooms. It's really good to do, I think.

Naty: Yes, my mother used to do that with me and she does it to my daughter now.

RT: Does what?

Naty: Told me magical stories about scary people so we would listen to our parents. I think my daughter will remember the story more when we make connections.

Providing parents with explicit guidance and facilitating the process of making connections to text enabled them to discuss how they can help their own children also make connections, as evidenced in their ensuing discussion that included references to their own past personal experiences, reflections on family culture and beliefs, and worldviews about current events. Parents demonstrated new learning from the deep analysis of the text by understanding and utilizing the process of making connections. This was exemplified in their discussion within this session, and even earlier in Session Two, and carried over into Session Four. Listening to the parents explain how they felt about making connections and how they planned to do this with their children gave me confidence that they would so in the future. As the parents reported how

they understood and appreciated the reason for making connections and how they planned to use this activity with their children, I realized the group was determined to try new strategies that would benefit their children's reading comprehension.

Session Four: Writing, Sticky Notes, and Close Reads. During a planned "mini" Close Read activity, Roxy and Ale did not understand how Sticky Notes might be used during reading, and so they raised this question in Session Four. This was another teachable moment, given that the use of Sticky Notes was not part of my session plan, and it was it was interesting to see how it complemented the mini-close reading. The parents were asked to reread a page in the chapter book which I specifically preselected, and then find words they though affected the mood of the story. It was a lengthy process, but very worthwhile because the analysis of the words they highlighted demonstrated a strong ability to identify the mood of the story and showed their proficiency with yet another reading strategy that could help their children when reading. Table 5 represents key statements made by five parents during a lengthy discussion on the use of Sticky Notes during the mini-close reading.

Table 5

Sticky Notes and Mini-Close Reading

Parent	Statement
Roxy	So that's how kids use them. Sticky Notes can be used when reading. We will look for words that describe the mood and put it on the Sticky Notes.
Ale:	My daughter uses a lot of Sticky Notes . . . for math too. I can use Sticky Notes with her if we read together. We are going to look for words and when we look for the words we are going to write it in the Sticky Note, right?
Mari	It looks easy for me to do with my child, even if it is one chapter or part of the page. I have the same words, most of them, and they are telling more about the feelings in the story.

Ann	I want to make sure, but what's the question we need to answer? So, I can try this too. We are only going to read and find those words on that page and put them on the Sticky Notes?
Bren	The words I put on the Sticky Notes were: slammed, tense, recurring, nightmare . . . suspense because in this part, how we read it over, the mood is changing.
Naty	I'm adding more: Startled, slammed, pounding, pushed, leaned, of the boots, the guns of the helmets, condescending, the fists, swift motion, slammed, and stiffened.
Angie	When I first read this, I didn't notice how these words do tell me the mood of the story. I wonder if my daughter knows how to do this. I will be asking her.

By using the Sticky Notes as a way to write the words that described the mood of the reading, the parents were able to do this without difficulty. When Ale mentioned how her daughter uses Sticky Notes for math, I noticed how others such as Mari and Bren appeared to feel relaxed and confidently indicated that they would try this type of note-taking with their children. This strategy provided a new learning opportunity for these parents to reference when helping their children with their reading. The discussion from the table above provides rich data, although unexpected, which complements the excerpt below and further expands on the parental discussion during the "mini" Close Read.

RT: The mini Close Read helps us discuss the words to understand the seriousness of the specific part of this text.

Ale: (nodding head in agreement) Oh, I see. They need to consider it so that they can know how the author [feels] because there are different types of authors that use different ways of writing.

Ann: It makes us reflect on the story because you made us look for words that drew our interest. And like you said yourself, sometimes the students just read and don't pay a lot of attention to the words and they won't be able to pick good words that explain the story.

Roxy: (smiling) Those are words that describe more, that describe like five senses.

Angie: (nodding in agreement) Yes, like imagining what's happening.

Ale: I'm going to definitely ask my daughter about Close Read. I'm just curious if she's paying attention.

RT: At home?

Ale: (laughing) No, in her class.

Through this exploration of the Close Read strategy, the parents were able to gain a deeper understanding of the text by re-reading a specific part. Also, by using Sticky Notes, the parents discovered how to write words to answer questions from a reading activity, such as a Close Read. The parents' statements in the chart as well as the brief excerpt indicate learning about Close Reads would provide them with a tool to help their children in their reading. In my journal, I noted how the parents were enthused to share the specific words from the text to better describe the mood of the story:

It was great to see how Ale and Mari complimented their selection of words and expressed how they would use this activity with their daughters. I liked how Roxy was able to identify certain words which all expressed the five senses, and informs me that she is able to dig deeper in analyzing the text.

The Close Read was a great success, as the Book Club discussions indicated that all of the parents learned to identify the mood of the specific part of the story by paying careful attention to the words in the text. In addition, during their discussions, they mentioned how they would use the Close Read activity and note-taking process with their children. Moreover, the strategy of utilizing Sticky Notes fostered more interaction within the group and further developed their interest in reading the text. As the parents completed the Close Read activity, they discussed this new reading strategy and how they were glad to learn another way to read for a purpose.

Session Five: Visualization and Sketch for Meaning. In the final Book Club session,

parents learned how to visualize key parts of the text. First, I provided them with a small graphic

organizer for a visualization activity and asked them to sketch their favorite part of the text. The

purpose here was to show parents how teachers can offer another way for students to

demonstrate their learning in groups or independently, in addition to talking and writing. After

completing their sketches, they were asked to write a sentence to explain the images. Six of the

parents sketched, and all seven provided a short description. It was interesting to see how some

parents drew the same scene or part of the text without consulting with one another. As

previously mentioned, it was an exciting way to end our book club experience as evidenced in

the excerpt below:

> Mari: (soft voice) It's not that I don't like to draw, it's that I don't know how to draw.
>
> RT: It's okay. You can help Ale or Roxy if you want. See what they are doing. Just remember to visualize the part of the text you are thinking of using. Then write what it means to you.
>
> Ale: (smiling) Help me, Mari. Help me with, you know what, putting down the words.
>
> Mari: (apprehensive) Like what?
>
> Ale: (smiling) Remember the part in the woods, the night time, the basket?
>
> Mari: Yes, I liked that part.
>
> Ale: Write some words that you remember or a sentence and I'll draw.
>
> Mari: (smiles) Okay.
>
> RT: Thank you, Ale, for including Mari. This sometimes happens in the classroom, so the teacher can give the student another way to participate. What is your opinion?
>
> Naty: What was the question?
>
> RT: How does a teacher grade this type of assignment? What if the student does not like to draw? What do you think the teacher would suggest?

Angie: (answering quickly, seeming impatient) Well, they should write instead.

Bren: Yes, I'll write. I don't think my drawing is good. (smiles)

RT: As a teacher, I would give a participation grade and ask them to explain what the words or symbols they drew mean, or hold a conference to talk and gain more information.

Ann: It doesn't have to be perfect, just something. Whatever you like.

RT: How can you apply this sketching with your children?

Ale: Well, looking up more information about the book on the Internet. I don't know how to say it, but get more involved with them. Because when I read the story, I felt as if I was in the story.

Roxy: This is fun and really easy.

Ann: You can explain to your children what they liked and have them draw to understand it better. Maybe she already does it.

Ale: My daughter's teacher has them draw the characters and write about them.

Naty: When I was reading the book, I would talk about to her (Naty's daughter) and tell her, "Look, isn't this awful?" or "Look at this exciting part" or "Look how ugly this is."

RT: How ugly? What do you mean?

Naty: The ugliness of the war, the Nazis.

RT: Mari, you're smiling. Did you want to share something?

Mari: (smiling) I don't like to draw, but my daughter does so she can do the hard work and I'll write.

This culminating activity seemed to enhance the parents' understanding of their favorite part of the text. As they visualized and sketched these images on the graphic organizer, and then wrote down what it meant to them, I was amazed at how the parents had similar sketches. I thought their favorite parts of the story were going to differ, but this was not the case. Ann, Ale, Naty, and Angie coincidentally sketched the same part of the text; however, their written

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explanations were different. It was interesting to see how six of the seven parents felt at ease,

and even enthusiastic to sketch, all the while discussing how they would incorporate this strategy

with their children. Mari was the only parent that did not feel comfortable sketching, but she

was able to write about her favorite part of the story and emphasized how she would like to have

her daughter sketch and she would write its meaning. Although Mari didn't feel comfortable

sketching, she did mention to Ale how she feels capable of helping her daughter with reading

assignments now that she has learned the Stretch-to-Sketch and visualization strategies. Thus,

she was still an active participant during the activity as she helped Ale by sharing her favorite

part of the story. As the group worked towards completing the activity, Ann, Ale, Naty, and

Angie also reported that even though these strategies are new to them, they look forward to

learning other new strategies that will help when reading. Parents were eager to complete this

activity and excited to share their work. Utilizing the strategy of visualizing a text and then

applying the Stretch-to-Sketch activity helped the group discuss the importance of using this

reading strategy with their children.

Summary

As evidenced in this chapter, the findings of the study provided important information

related to its three guiding questions, not to mention the fact that it helped me realize new ways

to improve my next parent book club. Parent comments made during any singular Book Club

Session often answered more than one of these questions, which was sometimes surprising, yet

served to enrich the findings and implications discussed in the next chapter. Each session was

unique due to the various book chapters discussed, and parent text engagement and motivation

were essential. I was surprised that the parents had several connections to self, to other texts, and

to the world, since both the picture book *The Whispering Town* and the chapter book *Number the*

Stars presented a different cultural, ethnic, and even geographic background from their own. In addition, the data presented here that resulted from the specific reading activities employed seemed to help the participating parents understand the importance of reading for pleasure, of analyzing texts for deeper meaning, and of having meaningful discussions about books as individuals and with their children. Observations from these sessions seemed to demonstrate that the parents were better equipped and more confident in helping their children at home with reading after having learned the literacy strategies introduced throughout the Book Club. Most importantly, it seemed that by using a book they requested—one that their children will read in fifth-grade—in the America Elementary's Book Club made an impact on the group's interest to continue to take part in their children's school parent programs. This study has also caused me to reflect on future research related to the America Elementary's Book Club, as well as possible ways to improve it. Chapter Five provides a discussion of this study conclusions, limitations, and implications for practice and research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion, Conclusions, and Implications

This qualitative study was inspired by the desire to learn how America Elementary could better provide text engagement opportunities for Latinx Spanish-speaking parents. As the school's bilingual coordinator, I interact with parents through its bilingual advisory committee (BAC), and the level of participation in this program has been a strong indicator of parent involvement and was shown to foster positive relationships with the school. Giving BAC parents the opportunity to request a specific type of engagement activity seemed to increase their willingness to participate. In 2016, a group of parents from this school elected to form a Book Club, selecting focal texts that their children would read in fifth grade. They also expressed the desire to learn the literacy strategies that their children would experience in their fifth-grade reading class. In addition, I wanted to determine how parents would engage with the texts, whether they would be able to make connections to them, and if and how specific literacy strategies could help better develop textual meaning.

Throughout the study parents demonstrated great interest when they were exposed to the literacy activities. In some sessions, especially during the last, parents stated that they would like to learn more reading strategies. It is encouraging to see the group wanting to learn more about how their children apply certain reading strategies when reading. The fact that they stated how the strategies in the study were easy to perform and that they would be able to do them with their children gives me motivation to conduct more parent Book Club with an emphasis on literacy strategies. For example, in the last session, the group indicated how a visualization of a specific section of the chapter was a fun way to understand the key parts. Also, the visualization strategy

helped the group effectively complete the Sketch to Stretch activity, which builds confidence in being able to carry out the activity with their child.

Another literacy activity that parents indicated was easy to do was the Exit Slip. When we used the Exit Slip, it appeared that the parents were curious to find out what was going to happen next in the story, and therefore text engagement was exhibited. In addition, the Exit Slip served as a comprehension tool for the parents and allowed a more personal form of communication where the parent could write their questions about the text if they did not to verbally ask during the group's discussion. Although the group enjoyed the Close Read activity, it was clear to see that we needed more time even though it was a condensed version. We needed more time due to some fantastic but unexpected parent questions asked during this activity. These wonderful questions, which I answered/explained, provided data that was coded as unplanned parent learning. For example, during the Close Read some parents noticed certain figurative language elements, such as metaphors, similes, and onomatopoeia words. It was important to answer their questions since it was engaging to them and they showed their interest in learning the author's use of words to described the mood of the story.

I now realize the need to provide parent workshops to introduce certain literacy strategies that could be utilized during the Book Club. These workshops encourage parents to become more involved with their children's learning. As parents learn these strategies, they develop confidence and may be able to practice with their children at home. For example, in one session a Close Reading workshop can introduce the activity and learn the steps so they can practice at home with their children. Then on another day, we could have a Close Read review, discuss the results of their practice conducted at home, and share what they learned about their experience. Another type of workshop can include parent and child learning the strategy together in school

so that they can then practice at home. As previously mentioned in Chapter Two, this type of

parent involvement teaches them what their children are learning in the classroom and promotes

awareness to the classroom curriculum (Epstein, 2001; Nathans & Revelle, 2013). According to

Epstein (2001), he refers this type of parent involvement as Learning Activities at Home, which

requires that teachers guide parents in monitoring and assisting and/or participating in learning

activities to then utilize at home. Some other types of literacy strategies could consist of

identifying the main idea of a text, making inferences, vocabulary development using context

clues, and summarizing the text. Another parent workshop could also emphasize figurative

language which has several types of areas and/or categories. By providing various types of

strategies, parents can choose what they would like to learn and have confidence when

participating in future Book Clubs.

According to research conducted by Olivos, Jiménez-Castellanos, and Ochoa (2011),

parents need to be offered educational opportunities that engage parents, thus encouraging them

to become more involved as well as help them build their reading capacity through various

literacy activities. They also noted that by providing interesting educational school opportunities,

Latinx parents can learn, grow, and achieve personal goals, and the school is able to support

these culturally diverse families in such endeavors (Olivos et al., 2011). The current study

provides detail about ways that Latinx parents can participate in literacy activities, together with

their reports on how they intended to use new learning with their children in the future.

Discussion of Findings

Parent engagement. Throughout the study, the central focus of the research was to

investigate the question: "What happens when Latinx Spanish-speaking parents and an

elementary school bilingual coordinator engage in a book club using the same historical fiction

text that is currently studied by the school's fifth-grade students?" Having dual roles as the researcher and the bilingual coordinator of America Elementary was beneficial for the study in many ways since I had a professional relationship with the majority of the participants through previous the BAC meetings and events. This enabled me to establish trust with the participating parents, which in turn created a path for the group to become involved in the school as active participants in the Book Club. Additionally, their involvement negates the stereotype of Latinx parents as unwilling participants in school activities (Hogg, 2011).

The first sub-question in the study explored how parents demonstrate engagement to Book Club texts. Interestingly, parent engagement was the driving force which seemed to guide parents to make connections to the books. All of the participants made specific connections as evidenced in their discussions, and experienced new learning while discovering how much they had in common. Figure 1 provides a visual depiction and summary of the types of book club activities that occurred during the study and the different ways that parents engaged in them, all situated within the context of a specific group community comprised of relationships between participants, as well as with myself that were built over time. The center circle lists general forms of parental text engagement during the study Book Club, and the outer circles lend more specificity by indicating the specific activities in which these occurred. These are connected to show that the general types of parental text engagement crossed these activities. The Figure background represents the relationships among participants, including the RT and represents the context and setting of the Book Club. Table 6, together with its discussion, provides more detail to the parental engagement (center circle in Fig. 1) identified in this study,
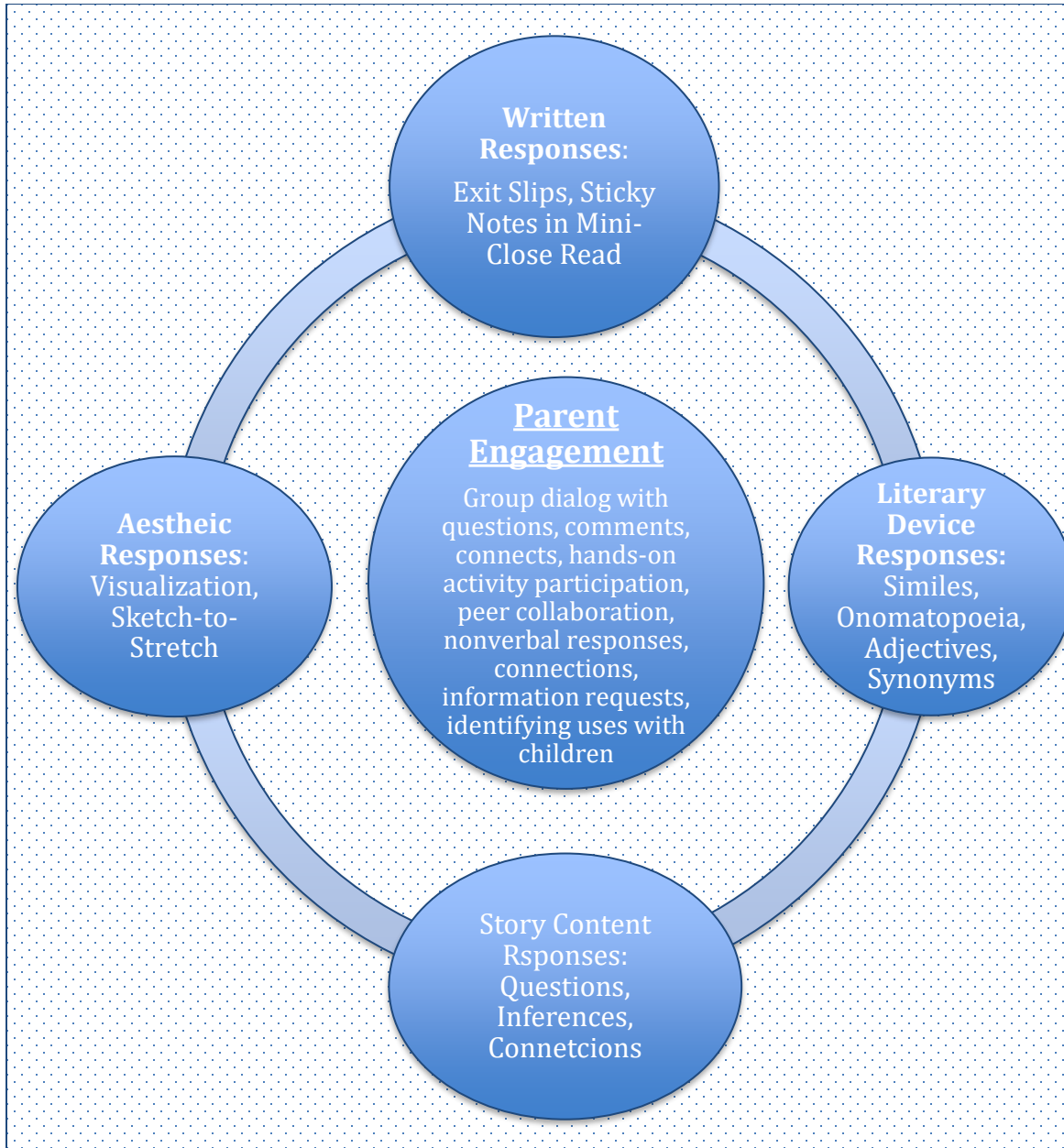
Figure 1. America's Book Club: Parent engagement in the context of a strong group community.

Table 6

Detailed parent engagement in Book Club Activities

Activities	Parent Engagement
Written responses: Exit Slips Note-taking - Sticky Notes Close Read Written Analysis	Discussions of writing prompted questions about the text Requested additional historical information regarding story setting and geographical location Requested titles of future texts their children would read in fifth grade
Literary device responses: Similes, onomatopoeia, adjectives, synonyms	Discussions about similes and onomatopoeia developed collaboration between peers Laughter (nonverbal response occurred throughout Book Club activities, but especially noticeable here) Provided additional examples using prior knowledge Discussions emphasized/connected to culture
Aesthetic responses: Visualization, Sketch-to-Stretch	Described mental images Discussions based on aesthetic thought and products Demonstrated comprehension of the focal text Collaborated with peers to complete

Oral discussions of story content: Generating questions, developing inferences, making connections, final reflections	Generated questions from the text and activities
	Curiosity resulted in:
	    Eagerness to better understand the text
	    Increased enthusiasm to utilize activity with their children
	Developing inferences about plot and setting, including time period and geographical location recollections
	Making Connections:
	    Text-to-Self: Family/childhood past experiences and cultural/traditional events, immigration
	    Text-to-Text/Media: *Diary of Anne Frank,* by Anne Frank; Life is Beautiful
	    Text-to-World: Political climate, immigration

Written responses. Written parent engagement occurred during an Exit Slip and the

Close Read with sticky notes as parents questioned and commented on the texts. In Session One,

the group was enthused to question the text during the discussion. The Exit Slip gave them the

option to write their question/s or opinions that otherwise they may have not have considered or

felt confident in verbally expressing. Also, the Exit Slip seemed to help the parents stay

immersed with the text and built on discussions from Session One, which generated similar

questions and opinions among the group. Another example of parents demonstrating engagement through questioning the text brings was shown when Mari, Roxy, and Naty asked for a list of texts/novels fifth-graders read throughout the year, which shows the parents connecting school to home. Additionally, Mari, Roxy, and Naty's curiosity encouraged the rest of the group to ask additional questions as they completed the Exit Slip. Such types of parent engagement are based on their vested interest in helping their children with reading, which can subsequently benefit student-teacher relationships through increased parent communication, confidence, and the potential to influence their child's academic achievement (Dearing, Kreider, Simpkins, & Weiss, 2006; Fan & Chen, 2001; Jeynes, 2003, 2005).

Mari and Roxy were actively engrossed with the Session One activity, as well as the other activities throughout the study. Looking back at all the session transcripts, I notice that they made several statements indicating that they were looking forward to completing these activities with their children. I feel that Mari and Roxy's inquisitiveness and determination to carry out the activities with their children gave other parents the motivation to do likewise. Trying to help their children with reading homework could be a challenging and delicate situation for these women, since their children exhibit various types of learning difficulties. Some schools have not provided equal academic and social opportunities for students with special needs (Jimenez & Graf, 2008), even though children with disabilities should be granted access to, and educated in general classroom settings, as well as allowed to participate in other educational activities (IDEA, 2004; Jimenez & Graf, 2008; Newman, Cameto, & Hernandez, 2005). Providing more opportunities like the Book Club may enable parents to be better informed about ways to help their children with specific reading strategies or instructional techniques, thus fostering meaningful parent, school-teacher, and student partnerships.

The collaboration between the school and the America's Book Club group resonates with research by Garcia (2004) that articulated the meaning of home school partnerships: "The responsibility for initiating and maintaining parent involvement initiatives in schools must be perceived as a shared process with the school, home, and community" (p. 291). The Exit Slip and Close Read activities allowed parents to experience new ways to help their children read curricular texts. These two specific activities are very similar to the sorts of instruction that fifth-grade teachers use in their reading classroom, thus making a case for the school to continue to develop school-parent partnership with future Book Clubs. The parents' willingness to consistently attend the Book Club study and actively participate in all activities, as well as their requests for aides to further their own understanding of the book and their expressed interest in extending their learning to work with their children can be attributed, in part, to the Book Club activities they found engaging.

Literary device responses. When the parents were introduced to the two literary devices of similes and onomatopoeia, they had a great time making connections to the text and laughed as they gave their own examples of similes. As evidenced in their nonverbal responses, this short activity created a sense of fun and pleasure as they discussed the text; it also served to further build a safe group community. For instance, Ale encouraged Roxy to elaborate on her examples of similes used in their own lives, pointing out how similes are used in Spanish soap operas, poetry, and songs. It was a lively session and upon conclusion, all of the parents were able to make up their own similes and indicated without solicitation that they would definitely utilize this activity with their children.

Another form of parent engagement spontaneously arose when parents learned how the author used certain types of words to describe sounds so as to accentuate part of the story. I

explained that words that make sounds are called onomatopoeia and the parents quickly gave

their own examples of this literary element, expressing how the Spanish language has certain

onomatopoeia words that are different from that of English. For example, Ale showed the group

her Spanish text edition and demonstrated how the author used the words, "blaff, blaff, blaff" to

describe the character jumping in a puddle of water. Then Angie indicated how that action

sounds like "splash" in English. Both Ale and Angie analyzed the text and drew conclusions to

identify how certain sounds would differ from English to Spanish. Ale was animated as she gave

an example of Spanish words such as "*pío, pío, pío*" for bird sounds while in English she heard

that it is "chirp, chirp, chirp." Angie excitedly mentioned that "*guau, guau, guau*" is the Spanish

sound of a dog barking, while in English it is "woof, woof, woof." There were some laughs as

the whole group gave more examples of this unexpected teachable moment, serving as further

evidence that they were enjoying themselves.

It was interesting to see how the group voluntarily focused on adjectives to describe the

characters, as well as the mood of certain parts of the text. The way that the group demonstrated

their engagement was through the discussions pertaining to the meaning of words, where they

relied on their native language. Roxy, Ann, Angie, and Ale provided synonyms in Spanish and

English for the adjectives in the passages. Angie, who attended high school in the U.S.,

expressed how she felt that books written in Spanish use more adjectives than in English. Ann

also appeared confident translating some of the Spanish synonyms to English. The way the

group was able to provide connections to words, in this case, adjectives demonstrated how the

parents built their vocabulary across their two languages in Book Club discussions.

In one of our sessions, Mari, Naty, and Roxy specifically asked me to provide them with

additional reading strategies so they could help their children. They explained that they planned

on asking them questions as they read to find similes and help them make connections. Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) expanded Vygotsky's ideas by explaining the role of the teacher as providing "scaffolding" to support learning. The study's findings are broadly in line with this research, since it demonstrated how the simile activity influenced the parent's knowledge and ability to eventually provide the right amount of scaffolding so their children have enough support to enable them to successfully complete their own simile search using their own texts.

  Aesthetic responses. The visualization activity also garnered active participation among the parents and seemed to create a sense of relaxation. For example, when we re-read a section of the chapter, the group was asked to think about what they could see, hear, or feel as if they were in the story, and then to draw or sketch what they visualized. This activity was fairly easy for the parents to complete and the discussion was entertaining, since the majority of the group had a similar visualization of the text. As they worked together sketching what they visualized, they discussed what their textual interpretations. I noticed the way everyone was very focused on sketching and thought that Bren and Ann may be feeling left out since they didn't feel comfortable drawing. However, before I could make any suggestions for them, Ale, Roxy, and Naty spoke up to encourage them to just write what they visualized and even offered to help them with the sketch. Ale and Naty showed them how to sketch as if they were both teachers. Both Bren and Ann were captivated as they paid close attention to the rest of the group and as a result, they successfully completed the activity. In my reflective journal, I indicated how these observations where the parents came together to assist one another through genuine collaboration. Visualization of the text did bring forth more active participation, since they worked together without me instructing them to do so, thus displaying a relaxed and positive teamwork experience.

   Oral discussions of story content. Generating questions and developing inferences provided meaningful ways that the parents were able to compare their shared experiences to the text. As they compared certain parts of the chapters, these discussions prompted text-to-self connections which emphasized the importance of their cultural background knowledge. An addition, by discussing the story's content, the group was able to elaborate on certain topics and form strong opinions based on the prior knowledge.

   Schema theory played a role in the study, as parents were able to organize their current knowledge of topics from the text and build on their prior knowledge through Book Club reading activities (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). My findings reveal the way parents utilized their schema as they made connections. For example, a session where the discussions centered on the U.S. government and illegal immigrants demonstrated parents' schema from their past experiences. The group discussion led some parents to make references to how the U.S. government planned to increase deportations of undocumented immigrants to Mexico. They explained how it was somewhat similar to the way Nazis gathered up all the Jewish families for "relocation." Such findings lend important to Freire's (1970) theory of critical pedagogy, which argues that schools should fully understand parents and their students and learn about their background experiences as well as have critical dialogue (Lyons, 2001).

   Part of my role as research teacher (RT) was to help guide the parents to think about their schema as we discussed the text. By activating their prior knowledge, the group was successful in making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections. As we re-read and discussed parts of the text, each member used their schema by giving detailed examples of connections made. In most cases, they were able to relate to their past life experiences. As I facilitated each session, I was successful in activating their prior knowledge by asking them specific questions

about the text so that they could discuss possible answers. This method aligns with the research

indicating how using prior knowledge in order to further develop an idea through questioning

can result in new background knowledge (Beyer, 1991; Kujawa & Huske, 1995). I was intrigued

at how the text questions generated similar text responses and connections within the group, such

as similar childhood experiences from Mexico.

As noted in Chapter One, "Funds of Knowledge" refers to the cultural ways of

community members and the essential cultural practices, values, and bodies of knowledge that

are embedded in the daily practices and routines of families (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez,

1992). The discussions parents have with their children about reading activities or assignments

in their native language can provide cultural connections. Likewise, the discussions during the

America's Book Club helped the group make connections to the text because parents were free

to reference their cultural home life experiences, and saw others modeling these connections.

For example, in one of our sessions, several parents described how they remembered attending a

wake procession in Mexico, with five of the seven parents able to vividly describe what they saw

and how they felt, all in connecting to the story contents. As they shared the details of their

connections, I asked if they had also shared this information with their children. Five of the

parents responded affirmatively, but only with their older children. I view this as a cultural

element of their upbringing, and this "Background Knowledge" has been, or will be shared with

their children.

Another example where parents drew from their Funds of Knowledge took place in a

discussion about the ways Mexican and Mexican American parents and grandparents tell

children stories, particularly fairy tales. The group made connections to that specific part of the

Number the Stars and further discussed how they continue to do this activity with some of their

younger children. They elaborated in detail and with enthusiasm about how they talk to their

children about their past experiences from Mexico when they themselves were children, showing

evidence of nostalgia. These past experiences helped the group make connections to the specific

part of the text being analyzed. By using their "Funds of Knowledge," the parents were also able

to see how making connections to texts can be beneficial when reading with their own children.

The Book Club sessions provided an open forum for the participating parents to express

their points of view, give opinions, and make different types of connections. In another example,

some parents explained how relatives, such as grandparents, played a major role in their

upbringing. When Angie and Roxy led the discussion on gender roles among women born in

Mexico compared to those born in the United States, evidence of cultural connections from their

"Funds of Knowledge" to a section of the text was also displayed. Here they explained their

views of their responsibilities as women, mothers, and homemakers. As the rest of the parents

gave their input, I had the impression that their own daughters have been privy to such

conversations which may possibly influence their own values about the roles of women, thus

instilling a personal family value for future generations.

Parents' "Funds of Knowledge" aided them in developing connections with the chapter

book, as well as with their own culture and life experiences, and bilingual abilities. This study

showed how the group benefited by making connections in regard to similarities and differences

in their two languages, and in their comfort level in code-switching, as well as from past and

present family connections to self, the world, and other texts or movies (see Table 7).

Table 7

Connection type and topic, with summary of statements evidencing Funds of Knowledge

Connection Type	Topic	Parent Statements
Text-to-Self	Languages (Spanish/English)	Comparing Languages Code-switching
	Religion	Prayer during funeral procession with family in Mexico as children The Star of David and the Cross
	Identity	Past-present cultural gender roles for Mexican-Americans Play as a child (games and toys) Mother's role in children's education Wife's role in marriage and family life (homemaker) and perceived husband/father's role
Text-to-World	Historical relevance	References to Holocaust persecution of undocumented immigrants
	Politics and current U.S. Events	Concerns over presidential campaign Climate around undocumented immigration and immigrants
Text-to-Text/Media	Text	*Diary of Anne Frank* by Anne Frank
	Movie	"Life is Beautiful," a documentary of Holocaust survivors

Through their dialogue around both the picture book and chapter book, the group was able to share past cultural family events from Mexico which they used to make meaning about the text during group discussions. Interestingly, these connections went beyond simply comprehending text content, as they served to build relationships among themselves, as they discovered common life experiences, as well as differences with one another. Listening to, and later reflecting on their lived histories allowed me to see the way parents were thinking about the text, as well as how and why they shared their plans to apply their learning from the experience to employ the different Book Club literacy strategies with their children. The families' rich

cultural and cognitive resources definitely promoted meaningful life and literacy lessons as they learned (Moll et al., 1992).

Text-to-self connections. Parents were able to make text-to-self connections when they discussed a specific type of figurative language such as onomatopoeia by comparing certain words that described parts of the story. These words being analyzed were adjectives and it seemed to imply that the parents were using metalinguistic awareness to think and transfer specific vocabulary background knowledge with new words/terms presented in the book, due to the use of their Spanish language (Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1996). Unknowingly, their metacognitive discussion served to facilitate their reading comprehension. For example, the way the parents provided synonyms for the adjectives informed that an emphasis on vocabulary helped them build on to their English word knowledge through their connections to Spanish word translations. When Angie and Ann were able to effectively translate Spanish synonyms to English, they were displaying a metacognitive bilingual strategy, which enhances the text's meaning and builds comprehension (Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1996). Vygotsky (1962) viewed learning a foreign language as "concise and deliberate from the start" (p.109). In this case, Angie was more aware of the functions of the English and Spanish language as she used the Book Club's text.

In Session Two, Angie and Ann code switched from Spanish to English during the adjective and synonym discussion. According to Becker (1997), bilingual Spanish and English speakers can consciously or unconsciously shift from one language code to another in the same conversation (Baker, 2011; García, 2009; García, & Wei, 2014).   I can relate to this practice since I am able to do this when I speak with certain people that also understand both of my languages. When I code switch, it is with informality and usually among friends. Code

switching allows me to negotiate between two cultures and express possible commonalities with

another similar speaker. Notably, this phenomenon is well documented in scholarly literature

(Baker, 2011; García, 2009; García, & Wei, 2014). It is possible that Angie and Ann were also

expressing a common understanding of their two cultures and languages and connecting the

content in the English language of the text to their understandings in Spanish. Some bilinguals

assert that this interchange between their two languages allows them to convey their message in

a more precise, natural, and personal manner (Becker, 1997; García, 2009; García, & Wei, 2014;

Lipski, 1982).

Making text-to-self connections can be difficult if you are unfamiliar with the topic being

discussed. Initially, I thought most of these Mexican American parents would be unable to make

text-to-self connections, given that *Number the stars* is a historical fiction text set during the

Holocaust over 70 years ago. To my surprise, they were able to make such connections even

though the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the book protagonists were different from those of

the parents. For example, textual references to the Jewish religion, the Star of David, and prayer

during a funeral procession evoked comparisons to the Christian religion, connecting the Jewish

symbol of the Star of David with the Christian symbol of the crucifix. The topic of religion,

although sensitive, was discussed respectfully and thoughtfully. As the facilitator, I led the

discussion in a non-judgmental manner and strictly referenced the text, but parents still made

their comparisons and connections to their own religious upbringings, thus linking their cultural

backgrounds and their childhood experiences.

The topic of identity brought forth several perspectives that stemmed from each

individual's culture, gender roles, and childhood memories. For example, there was a section in

the chapter book where two characters, mother and daughter, conversed on how women in their

country were expected to stay at home, maintain it clean, and be responsible for cooking for the

family. Keep in mind, that the story took place in Denmark during World War II which can lead

the reader to believe how, at this point in time, the Danish culture portrayed women in a certain

female role. When Anna, Angie, and Mari led the discussion and elaborated as to how these two

characters in the story, in a way, made a point to emphasize the importance of women taking on

the role of a homemaker/housewife. Even though, the story may have a different cultural

background compared to the group's Mexican-American background, they were able to relate to

this topic of identity by connecting it to their Mexican American culture. It was interesting to

see their reactions as they shared their memories of their childhood living in Mexico and

remembering their mother's or grandmother's roles. As the parents discussed this topic, I

noticed how Angie and Mari emphasized how times have changed and gave a few examples of

the changes and new opportunities for women and their roles in our current society. However,

Naty, Bren, and Roxy stressed how in some parts of the world, including in some places in

Mexico where they grew up, some women still continue to be treated in an unfair and/or unequal

when compared to the husband. Their opinions stimulated the discussion and all of them did

agree that their Mexican culture plays a major factor on how women are expected to behave.

Ann indicated how certain Mexican traditions also dictate how girls as well as mothers

should act and what is expected of them within their community. For example, the story's

section on how mothers are the primary care-givers which assumes that they are also responsible

for their children's academics/schooling. This slightly changed the conversation because they all

began to share their feeling about their daily responsibilities such as taking care of all the needs

of their children, while their husbands work. Out of the seven parents, five of them had very

similar opinions in regard to their roles as Mexican-American women living in the United States.

As for the other two parents, Angie and Mari, slightly differed, in regard to the roles of women in our current society. They stated that women can and should have careers and if needed, can be the provider for the family. They both felt that the husband should take an even larger role in helping with their children's school/academic components.

Text-to-world connections. The parents were also able to make text-to-world connections especially during a discussion on current U.S. politics. It is important to note that this study took place during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, during which candidates Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton were very much present in the news. The parents all voiced concerns and their views on current political issues, particularly focusing on how, if elected, Donald Trump could create negative changes to government policies for documented and undocumented immigrants. This discussion took place during our first session when the parents connected the U.S. political climate to the Nazi persecution of the Jews. Some of the parents made a link to the possibility that the U.S. government could also gather undocumented immigrants and deport them to their native countries of origin. In my reflective journal, I wrote,

> "I was fascinated by the way some of the parents were able to compare the Holocaust to the U.S. political debates and relate it to their personal experiences on immigration, since it could be a delicate personal topic. Seeing that five of the seven parents were the ones sharing their immigration experiences, tells me that they may feel that the Book Club is a safe place to discuss this hot topic, I also feel that we are building trust."

As the son of Mexican American immigrants, I could relate to their connections and understood their concerns. Some of my relatives came to the United States illegally and went through the long process of becoming U. S. citizens. I was amazed that the participating parents' prior knowledge made it feasible for them to make such text-to-self connections to the Holocaust.

Text-to-text/movie connections. Ale displayed strong enthusiasm when she gave her movie recommendation based on the Holocaust. Her connection to the movie, *A Beautiful Life* was an excellent example, since having seen it, I totally agree that it connects to the chapter book. She explained how, although different locations/settings, both the movie and the text shared similar events such as the persecution of Jewish families. As Ale described certain parts from the movie that ere relevant to the chapter book the rest of the group noticed her enthusiasm, which is why, in my opinion, led to Naty and Angie connecting to another book. They briefly described a part of the book, *Diary of Anne Frank* by Anne Frank and explained how the Nazi soldiers would raid all homes, especially the ones that they suspected were hiding Jews. Both the movie and the text that were being compared to the Book Club's chapter book generated interest, since I noticed how after the session had ended, some were asking for more details on the movie. Based on my observations, making text-to-text/movie connections was a good way to engage others not just during the Book Club discussion, but also afterwards since some parents voiced that they would watch the movie as well.

New Parent Learning. The participating parents in this study clearly indicated that they felt better equipped to help their children navigate reading in school, especially those with fifth grade students. In part, this seemed to be related to the fact that they felt more knowledgeable about the text, *Number the Stars* as they understood the story, and were looking forward discussing it with their children. Roxy and Ale shared their plans to have their daughters begin reading the text right away so that they could help guide them in visualizing key parts and showing them how to make connections. Here the parents saw themselves as ready to become Vygotsky (1978, 1986) "More Knowledgeable Other" for their child learners. These parents internalized the types of social interactions that occurred within the study Book Club with the

idea of applying it with their children. The Book Club gave parents the opportunity to learn new ideas as a result of social interactions and shared activities with peers and myself as the bilingual coordinator (Vygotsky, 1978).

Figure 2 is designed to outline concepts that the parents reported as new parent learning as a result of participating in this Book Club. The planned Book Club activities developed comprehension of the chapter book such as dialogue among the group and using a Close Read activity, which led to the strategy of making connections, thus receiving a deeper meaning of the text being analyzed. Another planned learning activity was utilizing a visualization strategy to create meaning, as well as sketching what the reader finds important or relevant to the story. In addition, parents demonstrated learning from spontaneous interactions and dialogue between within the group. For example, when I provided them with the details of the planned Close Read activity, the discussions unexpectedly led to an analysis of literary devices, such as onomatopoeia. Whether parents showed evidence of planned new learning or spontaneous new learning, the Figure 2 gives a visual representation of the specific areas that the group learned, and this information will be connected further in Table 8.
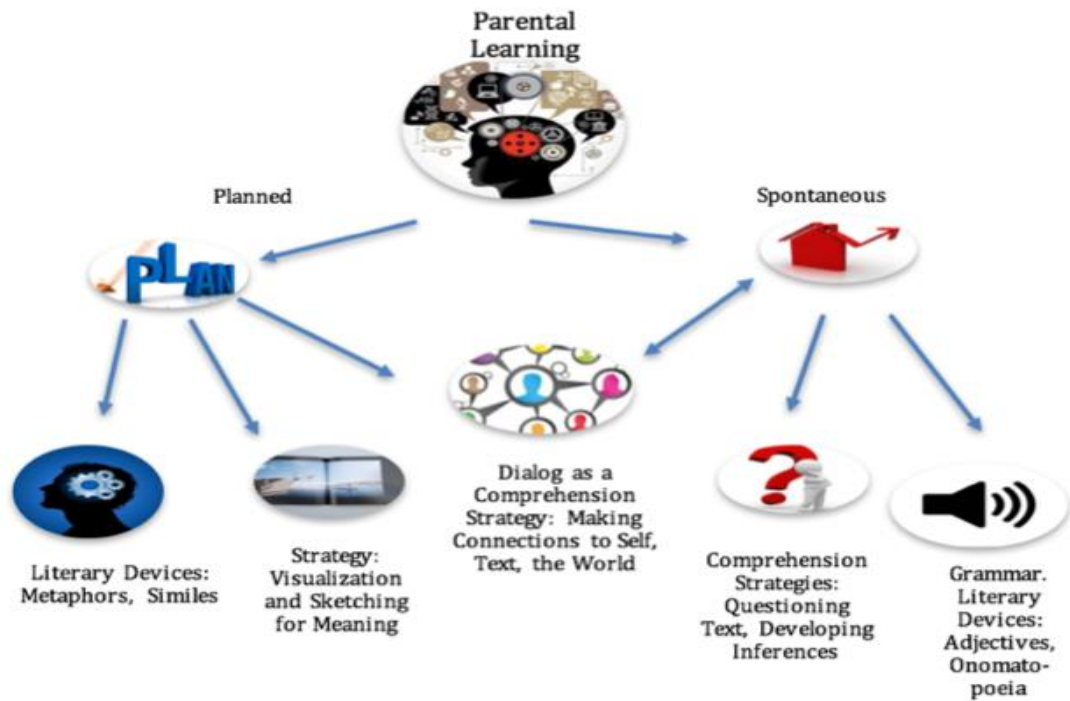
Figure 2. Concepts Parents Described as New Learning

The table below lists what each parent demonstrated as planned learning as well as spontaneous learning. Keep in mind that planned learning was based on what parents indicted within the discussions throughout all of the session. The specific activities that the parents participated in are what allowed me to discover what they learned. For example, during the visualization activity, all of the parents specified that they would be able to visualize another text with ease at home to help their children. I interpret this to mean that they felt confident and able to perform this reading strategy with their children during reading. In addition, as part of the Exit Slip activity following the first session the parents were able to express their written responses to the picture book activity (see Appendix H for Exit Slip graphic organizer). Furthermore, in my review of the parents' final reflections (see Appendix J) and follow up interviews (see Appendix K) of the planned activities, I can identify what specific areas they

considered new learning in contrast to a spontaneous type of new learning. The planned

activities provided a great deal of structure and information which helped me analyze what and

how these parents learned. These activities were instrumental since each activity embedded the

group's rich discussions as indicated in most of the transcribed and translated transcripts.

Table 8

Planned and Spontaneous New Learning Reported by Parents Individually

Parent	Planned Learning	Spontaneous Learning
Ale	Connections Similes Visualization Sketching for Meaning	Adjectives Questioning Onomatopoeia Assisting with Connections
Angie	Connections Similes Visualization	Adjectives Assisting with Connections
Ann	Connections Visualization Sketching for Meaning	Adjectives Assisting with Connections
Bren	Connections Visualization	Adjectives Onomatopoeia
Mari	Connections Similes Visualization	Adjectives Questioning
Naty	Connections Similes Sketching for Meaning Visualization	Questioning Assisting with Connections
Roxy	Connections Similes Sketching for Meaning Visualization	Questioning Onomatopoeia Assisting with Connections

Relationships in a strong group community.

The analysis of the data led to a new conclusion as to how the parent Book Club developed a contextual capacity essential for developing a positive group community. As previously stated, the Book Club discussions and activities, demonstrate how all parents were engaged with both the picture book and chapter book by making connections, as well as indicate how they learned new reading strategies that they can use to help their children at home. The common threads that wove together the fabric of these relationships within the Book Club are the shared cultural experiences. The fact that all of the participants are Mexican American which fostered an environment that nurtured open expressions, shared opinions, and mutual encouragement of one another. Participants were able to relate and empathize with one another's personal connections and life experiences which were revealed throughout the Book Club discussions. Our Mexican American culture was like a strong foundation where each participant was a solid pillar supporting the development of a cohesive learning community.

Researcher/Teacher (RT) musings on relationships with participants. The parent Book Club created deeper experiences between all participants, myself included. This study would not have been as successful if I, as the bilingual coordinator, did not fully understand and relate to they're their Mexican culture due to cultural differences. I also see how the fact that I have known five of the parents for quite some time through our school functions and/or taking part in parent-child school and non-school related cultural events. In my opinion, the most important component that made this Book Club rewarding has to do with the notion of trust, which we as a school community have built and will continue to build. In my reflective journal, I noted that I didn't realize how I was easily able to relate when parents were describing their connections. For example, when we discussed the topic of illegal immigration, in an instance I

remembered my uncle's long journey to the United States. This cultural personal connection that quickly manifested was almost like a natural thought process that complemented the breadth and depth of the discussion. Understanding the culture is the main element, it is the "It" factor that helped make this Book Club experience a success. The relationships that have been developed among the participants are cultural keystones that have brought them together and/or closer together, myself included. This is evident when I started to notice how parents began taking more of a leadership role and leading more of the book discussions. This tells me that some of the parents were feeling more relaxed and empowered, to the point where they could trust each other with the group activities I must admit that at times I take my culture for granted, since I feel that that someone else may be able to relate to a topic even though he/she may not be of that same culture. This in mind, reflecting on how culture played an essential role in the study, this experience that has given me ideas for future research all on the topic of culture being the instrument in providing parents ways to build relationships in their children's school community.

Relationships among participants. The group also developed a sense of belonging to a learning community through their interactions. This activity took place on our last session, which highlighted how the group came together throughout the sessions and were able to work together, as well as learn from each other. These two activities reinforce the notion that learning takes place as a result of social interactions and shared activities with peers and examines the relationship between language learning and development through a sociocultural experience (Bruner, 1985; Wertsch, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978). The group actively worked and learned from each other as they made their best efforts to complete the two activities. Ale, Roxy, and Naty were more capable of sketching and took on the role of the "more knowledgeable others," using their social skills and animated collaboration with Bren and Ann to help them accomplish the

activity (Vygotsky, 1978). In addition, I acknowledge that as a participant in the Book Club, I took on the role of the "more knowledgeable other" by facilitating all of the activities with the group. In modeling the steps of the activities, I was extremely energetic and patient, in order to develop an exciting learning experience for the parents. Vygotsky's notion of a "more knowledgeable other" suggests that learners use group-learning experiences where individuals with less knowledge of a given task or a topic develop and learn with the help of other group members or the leader. In this study, all of the activities lent themselves to a unique engaging Socio-Cultural parent experience (Vygotsky, 78).

Limitations

There are some limitations that I encountered during the study, the first occurring during the selection of parents as only a small group of parents were able to participate due to the fact that the Book Club meetings occurred after school and took place at the home of one of the parents. This is because other parents who normally attended such meetings did so because they took place inside the school during regular school hours of student instruction. Other parents with full-time jobs would also not be able to participate in a Book Club during the workday. For example, there was a parent who originally agreed to participate in the study, but had to withdraw due to a new job opportunity. She was disappointed that she could not participate, but expressed that her family needed the extra income. Although there were seven participating parents, some had to leave sessions a bit early and one parent missed an entire session. Naturally, unpredictable circumstances can affect the parents' commitment to long-term participation. However, the findings of this study may have been different with a larger group of parents, or if meetings could have been held at a different time and location.

Being a teacher leader as well as the bilingual coordinator means that I might have influenced the parents' responses. For instance, I had a strong relationship with five of the seven parents which had developed over the course of more than three years, so I was assured that most group participants felt comfortable speaking freely. I was conscious, however, that I may have talked too much or asked too many questions during Book Club sessions. However, I was also a participant and guided each session, since I was tasked with facilitating all of the activities as part of my regular employment at the school. While my role meant that I needed to help the group engage in each discussion, I was thrilled when parents took over and led some of the discussions. During these times, I remained ready to refocus if the discussion strayed away from the designated topic. At the same time, I paid attention to the parents' facial expressions, which seemed to indicate impatience with some of the discussions, such as rolling of the eyes or yawning, particularly when one of the parents sometimes monopolized the discussion. At these points, I worked to involve other parents so that everyone could have an opportunity to give their insights.

The length of each session was capped at one hour, which was not quite long enough for at least three of the discussions. The one-hour time limit was implemented to ensure that participation in the study would not impose on the family's home which hosted the meetings, as her own children needed her attention after school. Additionally, there were two sessions that were interrupted by the host's husband as he arrived home early from a long day at work, and she needed to attend to some of his needs. Thus, the timeframe of the sessions limited discussions, particularly during activities that required more time to write. Finally, I underestimated the parents' writing abilities and time needed for such activities and realized that each session needed to be longer to ensure a quality parent experience.

Implications for Future Practice

This study revealed the importance of providing parents with additional learning opportunities, especially those that include reading strategies. In fact, after the study, five of the parents clearly stated that they wanted to learn other types of literary devices, how to help their children read faster (fluency), and how to become a better speller. After each session, the parents asked questions pertaining to their children. For example, Naty wanted to know how she could help her youngest kindergarten daughter learn to read. She liked the reading ideas utilized in the Book Club, but I explained they would be more useful for her third grader. Other parents also wanted more information and ideas specifically for their children in other grade levels with different reading levels. Parent engagement and learning opportunities, such as the Book Club employed in this study are critical. These programs require an experienced facilitator or moderator to be able to effectively guide discussions so that everyone is allowed to participate equally. This person should set guidelines at the start of the project to make sure all members are respectful of everyone's opinions.

Schools that may have strained relationships with parents or have not developed a strong rapport with them may lead to reduced parent involvement in general. For schools with large numbers of bilingual populations, a school administrator can allow the bilingual coordinator the necessary time to hold several parent meetings in both English and Spanish so as to better understand their needs. Taking the time to get to know parents, offering parent choice in the selection of engagement activities, and providing access to school resources will foster a strong parent involvement.

More specifically, to improve America Elementary's Book Club, the school should offer parents a broader range of engagement opportunities. For instance, the bilingual coordinator or

another teacher leader can facilitate Book Clubs targeting parents of students at different grade levels. The involvement of other teachers will promote the importance of literacy development in more than just the fifth grade, as was the focus of the current study. Instead, offering programs appropriate for more grade levels demonstrates to parents the teachers' dedication to their student's learning. Another example is to offer a Saturday book club for parents who otherwise would be unable to attend during the week due to work schedules. Moreover, the school's administration can include funding in the annual budgets designated to teachers who are willing to implement a Book Club for the parents of their students' or grade level. Schools that lack funding can consider hosting or supporting fundraisers to create a school-wide support for the program and build a stronger school community.

During the current study, Ale mentioned that it would be nice to have a list of curricular novels or books and their themes that would be read by students in each grade level during the academic year. This suggestion is another implication for practice that could be implemented during the school's open house the first week of the new school year, while a list of books could be provided towards the end of the school just before summer. This would allow students and their parents the time needed to locate or purchase the texts and possibly obtain them in the Spanish language version. Parents would also have the opportunity to read these titles during the summer with the goal being to participate in the parent Book Club at the beginning of the new school year.

Another implication for practice is the possibility of parent-daughter/son Book Clubs, which would allow new ways for parents to be further involved in their child's learning. These would reinforce or introduce reading strategies used in various grade levels while simultaneously: a) exposing parents to their instructional implementation, b)

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creating/strengthening parent-child reading experiences, and c) fostering school-home connections to provide parental support. Such experiences will serve to improve feedback and input from both the teacher and the parent, thereby benefitting students.

Including the local public library as a Book Club partner could open up the possibility of a wealth of resources beyond those of the school. Such a partnership would require mutual goals, such as implementation of the library's own Book Club that uses the same texts as the school. This would provide additional sites and times for families that otherwise would not be able to attend a Book Club at the school. Networking with local businesses or other community stakeholders, school fundraisers, and community book fairs could also provide funding and needed materials. These activities can promote literacy not just within the school, but in the community as well and serve to bring the school community together and foster a collaborative, inclusive environment for all families.

All parents, not solely Spanish-speaking parents, could benefit from being exposed to new ways of reading and being part of Book Club discussions. Another suggestion is the addition of technology, such as blogs, surveys, video conferencing, and other computer programs already in place at the school. For example, parents who are unable to attend one of the Book Club sessions could elect to participate via video conferencing if they have access to a computer with Internet access. Book Club discussion notes or book questions can also be readily available by setting up a blog. Using technology to improve America Elementary's Book Club will bring new parental engagement opportunities, such as instructional workshops on how to utilize the specific technology.

Future Research

Although the Book Club was a success, this study may not have the same results at other schools for various reasons, mainly due to the emphasis placed on the school's bilingual coordinator or the teacher leading the Book Club. For example, I was able to identify with the parents since I am of Mexican American descent, only spoke Spanish at home, and lived in Mexico from the time I was age until age six. I have a strong understanding of the culture which made it easier to communicate with parents, which is a unique attribute. The person leading the Book Club will need effective communication skills in both languages in order to develop a solid rapport with the parents involved, thus slowly establishing trust. Building trust is a one key component that helped me encourage parents to participate in the study. This trust was created with time, which is why it would be difficult for a new school staff member to lead the Book Club. It may take the new coordinator additional time to call parents and have qualitative conversations about ideas for the BAC or answer questions that parents may have.

Another key component has to do with being part of the parent/group's culture and includes knowledge of the language, traditions, and other ethnic customs. For example, some parents who were born and raised in Mexico have distinct dialects because they were raised in different regions of Mexico. Their language use may also have different phrases or colloquial references, such as their own type idioms, jokes/humor, and speech patterns. I can compare this concept to the language use and intonation from someone who is born in Texas compared to someone born in New York. Since the study takes into consideration language, culture, and parent choice within the Book Club, the bilingual coordinator will need to complete the necessary pre-planning. This entails the administration's input and decision making as well as the parents – in this case, bilingual parents from the BAC. The bilingual coordinator will also

need to not just speak the language, but also understand the various cultures within a given school. In parents, this will create a sense of belonging and feeling valued and respected, which will be necessary to take part in school-sponsored engagement opportunities such as a Book Club.

Understanding the parent's culture is crucial to having a successful Book Club, especially if the text has a similar theme to the group's cultural background. As previously mentioned, the study consisted of two Latinx parents born but not raised in Mexico for most of their childhood and five immigrant Latinx Mexican parents, who were born and raised in Mexico. Keep in mind, there is a Mexican cultural traditional understanding that emphasizes the male dominance or authority over women in certain settings. What this tells me is that it is possible that the parents, all of whom are women, may have treated me in a specific way or responded in certain ways during our Book Club discussions so as to comply or agree with areas of the text. I wonder if they would treat a female coordinator differently than a male. This concept of traditional cultural gender differences is a good topic for future research.

Another interesting area for future research consists of involving fathers in the Book Club, which may require different approaches to scheduling and planning. Since they may work during the week, the Book Club could be offered on the weekend. This will encourage them to bring their child with them, so that they could both share this educational experience. In addition, it would be interesting to add some motivational components, such as including some traditional Mexican pastries, incorporating arts and crafts, utilizing graphic novels as the focal text, and/or complementing it with a sports program such as soccer. These motivational components would take place after the Book Club and it could promote extra-curricular activities that could also take place during the school week.

In addition, the following are few questions that also deserve to be explored:

- Would the book club be as successful and supportive if I didn't share their language or cultural background?

- Would the parents have been as open and as forthcoming in their dialogue and exchanges if there was not the context of a shared cultural background?

- Can researchers measure the impact that the shared native language and mutual cultural background has on parent engagement?

Most bilingual coordinators will have the theory, knowledge, and methods to facilitate a parent Book Club that incorporates literacy techniques, but future research can explore to what extent the shared cultural and language experience can impact or contribute to a rich and rewarding parent engagement experience that fosters deeper literacy connections.

Conclusions

This study focused on parent engagement within the America Elementary School Book Club in order to learn how parents might engage with a chapter book and make connections to it by participating in utilizing specific learning activities. In addition, I wanted to see how parents identified new learning as a result of their participation in this study. This investigation showed the importance of school programs that foster parent involvement, specifically a Book Club that utilized a historical fictional text that the participating Latinx parents' fifth grade students would read in school. Creating space for parents to participate in school events like a Book Club can establish and foster parent-school partnerships. This program encouraged parents to help their children with reading as they better realized the strengths they already possess in this area, as well as giving them opportunities to learn new strategies they can draw from. This type of

interaction will result in positive experiences for their children and create stronger parent-child connections (Olivos, 2006; Ortiz, & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005).

When Spanish-speaking parents are able to help their bilingual children at home, in this case with reading, it helps dispel the unfounded myth that Latinx parents do not prioritize or want to be involved with their child's academic development (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006). Unfortunately, the reality is that many schools do not place a priority in building rapport with their Latinx parents (Moll & Greenberg, 1991; Olivos, 2006; Ortiz & Ordoñez-Jasis, 2005; Rodriguez-Brown, 2001). As demonstrated in this study, the establishment of a constructive, open-minded dialogue between the school and Latinx parents, can result in a sharing of ideas that cultivates mutual learning.

Other schools with large Spanish-speaking student populations can benefit from this study, particularly given the increase of such English Language Learners in U.S. schools today. Providing their parents with engaging learning opportunities can also create positive academic achievement for their children (Olivos et al., 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Furthermore, by focusing on Latinx parents' participation in programs such as Bilingual Advisory Committee meetings, after-school programs, classroom instructional workshops, or other events, supports parents so that they are empowered to expand their own academic development. America Elementary's Book Club presented Spanish-speaking Latinx parents with the opportunity to take part in collaborative group reading experience that ultimately culminated in critical communication between parents and administration through the bilingual coordinator. This school's Book Club will continue to be part of the school's parent programs with its goal of increased parent-school participation through meaningful educational experiences of their choice.

As a result of this study, I feel confident in continuing to provide Latinx Spanish-speaking parents more opportunities to take part in future Book Clubs given that the study demonstrated how a group of parents were willing to learn new ways to help their children with reading. As a bilingual educator and coordinator, I feel great enthusiasm to continuing this work with current and new BAC parents so as to support new learning.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Informed Consent

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. This form outlines the purposes of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

I consent to participate in a research study conducted by Pablo Ochoa, a Doctoral level student at National-Louis University. The purpose of this study is to explore Latinx Spanish speaking parent engagement opportunities at the participants' child's school. Specifically, this study will have participants take part of a parent book club.

I understand that my participation will consist of attending 6 sessions of a parent book club. I will be given a Spanish or English chapter book to read during the week. During the book club meeting, discussions and writing activities from the readings will done. The parent book club will meet once a week for one hour.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without prejudice until the completion of the study.

Benefits of participating in this study include: building a stronger parent-school connection, connecting with your child's learning, and increasing parent-school involvement through literacy engagement opportunities. There are no foreseen risks with participating in this study, except for mild discomfort being in a group setting or having to speak in front of a group.

I understand that my identity will not be revealed and that any information or data gathered during the sessions will be kept confidential.

If you have any questions or concerns before, during, or after your participation, please feel free to contact the researcher for this study, Pablo Ochoa at 708-743-4935.

Participant's Signature _____ Date_____

Researcher's Signature_____ Date_____

Appendix B

Consentimiento Informado

Esta forma delinea el propósito de esta investigación y proporciona una descripción de su participación y derechos como participante.

Yo doy consentimiento de participar en este estudio de investigación llevado a cabo por Pablo Ochoa, un alumno que está haciendo su Doctorado en National Louis University. El propósito de este estudio es para explorar las oportunidades de participación de padres Latinx que hablan español en actividades en la escuela de su hijo/hija. Específicamente, en este estudio, los participantes participaran en un club de lectura.

Yo entendió que mi participación consistirá de asistir a 6 sesiones del club de lectura. Se me dará un capítulo de un libro en español o inglés para leer durante la semana. Durante el club de lectura, habrá una discusión acerca del capítulo y ejercicios de escritura. El club de lectura se llevara a cabo una vez por semana y durara una hora cada sesión.

Yo entendió que mi participación en este estudio de investigación es voluntario y puedo parar de participar en cualquier momento sin ninguna infracción.

Beneficios de participar en este estudio incluyen: construir una relación más fuerte entre los padres y la escuela, estar más apegado con el aprendizaje de su hijo/hija, y ofrecer más oportunidades para los papas de involucrarse en actividades de alfabetización. No se anticipa que este estudio produzca riesgos para el participante. Aunque puede haber algo de incomodidad para aquellos que no les guste estar en un grupo o hablar en frente de otras personas.

Yo entendió que mi identidad no será revelada y que cualquier información que sea grabada u obtenida en las sesiones será tratada de manera confidencial.

Si tiene alguna pregunta antes, durante, o después de su participación, por favor contáctese con el investigador del estudio, Pablo Ochoa al 708-743-4935.

Firma del Participante _____   Fecha _____

Firma del Investigador _____   Fecha _____

Appendix C

PARENT RESPONSE TO PARTICIPATE

ENGLISH

I would like to participate in the book club and interview being held for this study. I understand that my identity will remain confidential throughout.

I am fluent in both English and Spanish   _____

I am fluent in Spanish only   _____

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email address: _____

Appendix D

RESPUESTA DEL PADRE PARA PARTICIPAR

ESPAÑOL

Me gustaría participar en el club de libro y la entrevista que se llevara a cabo en este estudio. Entiendo que mi identidad permanecerá confidencial.

Hablo fluente Ingles y Español   _____

Hablo fluente Español   _____

Nombre: _____

Número Telefónico: _____

Correo Electrónico: _____

Appendix E

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTION FORM

After reading the initial interview protocol as developed by National-Louis University, the interviewee will be asked:

a. What is your country of origin?

b. How long have you lived in the United States?

c. How many members are in your family living with you?

d. Did you attend school? If you did, up to what grade?

e. What is your child's grade?

f. What are your views on volunteering at school?

g. In what ways do you or would you like to volunteer?

Appendix F

FORMA PREGUNTAS DEMOGRÁFICAS

Después de leer el protocolo de la entrevista inicial, desarrollado por la Universidad Nacional-Louis, el entrevistado se le preguntó:

a. ¿Qué es su nombre y cuál es su país de origen?

b. ¿Cuánto tiempo ha vivido en los Estados Unidos?

c. ¿Cuántos miembros hay en su familia que viven con usted?

d. ¿Asistió a la escuela? Si es así ¿hasta qué grado?

e. ¿En qué grado esta su hijo/a?

f. ¿Cuáles son sus opiniones sobre ser voluntario en la escuela?

f. ¿De qué manera usted es o le gustaría ser voluntaria?

Appendix G

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

English

1. How do you feel about reading?

2. How do you help your child with their reading homework?

3. What are some of the discussions/talks that you have with your child about what they

   read?

4. What are some of the reading activities that your child does in their classroom?

5. What do you think you will gain from a book club?

Spanish

1. ¿Cómo se siente acerca de la lectura?

2. ¿Cómo ayuda a su hijo/a con la tarea de lectura?

3. ¿Cuáles son algunas de las discusiones / conversaciones que tiene con su hijo/a sobre lo

   que leen?

4. ¿Cuáles son algunas de las actividades de lectura que su hijo/a hace en la clase de lectura

   en el salón?

5. ¿Usted cree que será beneficioso un club de lectura para padres en la escuela?

MEXICAN AMERICAN PARENT BOOK CLUB

Appendix H

Exit Slip

EXIT SLIP

Name   Date   Fecha

Nombre   Session #___

Something I learned today   Something that I am confused about

Algo que aprendí hoy   Algo que estoy confundido acerca de

How I felt about today's session – Cómo me sentí con la sesión de hoy

Appendix I

Graphic Organizer

Sketch/Drawing Visual Representation

Name _____Date_____

Draw or sketch what you took away from the reading.

You can use symbols in your drawings

Dibujar o esbozar lo que tomó distancia de la lectura.

Puede utilizar símbolos en sus dibujos

Chapter/ Capítulo _____ Pages / Páginas _____

Appendix J

Final Reflection – Reflexión Final

Name _____

Please share some of your favorite highlights from the book?

Por favor, comparta algunos de sus aspectos más destacados favoritas del libro.

Please reflect and share what were some of the positives and negatives of the book club experience?

Por favor, reflexionar y compartir lo que fueron algunos de los aspectos positivos y negativos de la experiencia de club de libro.

Appendix K

POST-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

English

1. After being in the book club, how do you feel about reading?

2. Now the book club has ended, how can you help your child talk about reading?

3. How would you feel about asking your child's teacher for a list of the books they will

    read during the school year?

4. What are some things you learned from the book club experience?

5. What personal connections were you able to make from the story?

6. What do you think is important to have in a book club?

Spanish

1. ¿Cómo se siente acerca de la lectura ya que se terminó el club de lectura?

2. ¿Ahora que el club de lectura ha terminado, cómo puede usted ayudar a su niño/a a hablar

    sobre la lectura?

3. ¿Cómo se sentiría al pedirle al maestro de su hijo/a una lista de los libros que leen

    durante el año escolar?

4. ¿Cuáles son algunas cosas que ha aprendido durante su experiencia en el club de lectura?

5. ¿Qué conexiones personales pudo hacer con el cuento que leímos?

6. ¿Qué es algo importante para tener en un club de lectura?

Appendix L

Mexican American Parents of Elementary Students, Literacy Engagement, and Children's

Literature:

A Case Study of a Bilingual (Spanish/English) Parent Book Club

Pablo F. Ochoa

Reading and Language Doctoral Program

Submitted for Approval

[ADD DATE], 2018

Approved:

_____   _____

Chair/Co-Chair, Dissertation Committee   Program Director

_____   _____

Co-Chair/Member, Dissertation Committee   Director, Doctoral Programs

_____   _____

Member, Dissertation Committee   Dean's Representative

_____

Date Approved

Copies to: Student
                 Dissertation Chair
                 Director, Doctoral Programs
                 Program Director

Appendix M

Dissertation Approval Meeting Scheduling Form

Student's Name: Pablo F. Ochoa
(as it will appear on dissertation)
Student's Address: 3618 West 125th Street Alsip, IL. 60803

Student's Telephone   (708) 743-4935

Doctoral Program: Reading, Language, and Literacy

Dissertation Committee: Dr. Ruth Quiroa_____Chair

                               Dr. Sophie Degner_____Member

                               Dr. Terry Smith_____Member

Dean's Representative: Dr. Donna Ogle_____

Dissertation Title:

     Mexican American Parents of Elementary Students, Literacy Engagement, and Children's

                                   Literature:

          A Case Study of a Bilingual (Spanish/English) Parent Book Club

Times (2 hours) when the Student, Committee and Dean's Representative are available to meet:

Day Thursday   Date: 04/26/2018   Time: 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Preferred meeting place: North Shore__ Wheeling__ Chicago X   Lisle___ Elgin__ Other: ___

Student's Signature_____ Date_____

Dissertation Chair's Signature_____ Date_____