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## **Myth Busting: Low-Income Latinx Immigrant Parental Involvement**

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Family Literacy Program:** Educational programs commonly sponsored by public libraries to support families with young children in fostering early literacy skills that will benefit the children's education.

**New Latino Diaspora:** The newest migratory destination of Latinx immigrants to the U.S. Southeast.

**Social Narratives:** Implicit presumptions that often reflect the dominant perspectives of a social group.

## Chapter 11

# Myth Busting: Low-Income Latinx Immigrant Parental Involvement

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## ABSTRACT

*This longitudinal qualitative study, involving low-income parents and children, tutorial-agency staff, and one college student (all Latinx), took place in a city along the U.S./Mexico border. Data sources included field notes through participant observation, questionnaires, and interviews. The authors asked, “How are parents involved in their children’s education? What limitations or barriers do they express?” Using a social justice framework and grounded-theory data analysis, these types of parental involvement emerged: academic, social skills, school volunteerism, extracurricular activities, community, and college enrollment. Conversely, parents expressed involvement obstacles. Implications relate to changing the deficit discourse regarding low-income, immigrant parents’ involvement. Collaborating with families to create equitable educational outcomes for minoritized children is imperative.*

## INTRODUCTION

Some mainstream educators perpetuate negative discourse of Latinx immigrants’ parental involvement (Valdés, 1996), especially if parents do not speak English (Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002), are minoritized (Flores & Rosa, 2015), and are low-income (Altschul, 2012). Yosso (2006) critiqued the deficit assumption that “parents neither value nor support their child’s education” (p. 75). Despite obstacles, such as the English language and inadequate knowledge of the U.S. educational system, Latinx immigrant parents have high expectations for their children’s education and want to participate in their children’s academic success (Coronado, 2003; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Hernández, 2003; Zalaquett & López, 2006).

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This topic is important because parental involvement in their children's education correlates positively with their children's academic success (Jeynes, 2016). In a meta-analysis of 42 studies of pre-kindergarten to college youth, Jeynes found a significant correlation between parental engagement, overall child outcomes, and child academic achievement. Specific to the topic of our chapter, Latinx parental involvement relates to their children's academic success (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; García & Kleifgen, 2010; Zalaquett & López, 2006).

Furthermore, although low socioeconomic status (SES) does relate to less involvement by Mexican-heritage parents, parental involvement is more salient than SES for student achievement (Altschul, 2012). In a national longitudinal study of 1,609 Mexican-heritage students, Altschul discovered that parental engagement "appeared to mediate the effects of income and mothers' education on youth's achievement" (p. 20). Likewise, Caspe (2009) concluded from her literacy findings of Latinx mothers and their children, "Demographic characteristics, such as maternal education, were not nearly as important in predicting children's outcomes, as were booksharing styles" (p. 321). Additionally, Caspe, like UNESCO (1948), believed families to be foundational for their children's development. In this particularly foreboding time in the USA and world, it is important to push back on the pathologizing, marginalizing discourse regarding the subaltern and to realize intersectionality in education, ethnicity, immigration, language, race, social class, and other factors (Anzaldúa, 2007; Berliner, 2009; Bussert-Webb, Díaz, & Yanez, 2017; Murillo, 2012; Yosso, 2006).

We define parental involvement as guardians being supportive of academic and extracurricular activities, navigating school choices, conveying school's importance (Harris & Robinson, 2016), and teaching their children social skills to function with peers and teachers (Bussert-Webb et al., 2017). Getting along with others is part of 21st Century career and life skills, involving emotional and social competencies (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2007).

Epstein (1987) described six basic categories of parental involvement: parenting, communicating with the school, volunteering at the school, facilitating children's learning at home, participating in decision-making at the school, and collaborating within the community to improve the education system. Families operationalize these categories in two dimensions: participation at home and school. We found these categories present in our study, except for participating in decision-making at school. This decision-making input of nondominant parents relates to Fraser's (1997) concept of representative justice.

Our parental involvement chapter is based on our ten years of studies in a low-income Texas neighborhood with immigrant parents and their children and Díaz' two studies in the same city. Díaz' first study took place in a different low-income neighborhood; her second study took place at our university campus with a pre-service teacher, who served as a focal participant. Our research questions were:

- How are Latinx parents involved in their children's education?
- What limitations or barriers do they express?

## BACKGROUND

### Theoretical Framework

Social justice informs this study because of structural inequalities and resistance (Fraser, 1997; Freire, 2000) and the discourse of power (Foucault, 1972; Fraser, 2008). In an attempt to theorize and redress

injustices, we connect these inequities to recent Latinx immigrants' access to education and the Latinx education crisis, related to schools' inability to adequately educate Latinx youth (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). We focus on Fraser's (1997) multidimensional three Rs: redistribution (access to quality education), representation (minoritized people holding powerful positions and shared decision-making in schools), and recognition (valuing diverse people).

Regarding redistribution (Fraser, 1997), unequal educational resources for nondominant children relate to the opportunity gap (Darling-Hammond, 2013). This is because unequal access between groups influences people's academic outcomes (Darling-Hammond). Thus, instead of mentioning the achievement gap, e.g., how economically-strapped minoritized children may lag behind affluent white students, scholars might focus on the opportunity gap, e.g., less qualified teachers and unequal resources (Darling-Hammond; Gorski, 2013).

Next, representation includes low-income, nondominant parents collaborating with educators and policy-makers in decision-making. Additionally, more minoritized parents can hold school- and district-level positions to affect change (Fraser, 1997). Shared governance at local, state, national, and international levels is equally important, as are human rights that protect nondominant families and their language and education (UNESCO, 1948).

Conversely, recognition relates to how teachers, the media, and outsiders perceive recent immigrants in poverty and the neighborhoods where they live (Bussert-Webb, 2015). Because of de facto segregation for poor communities of color, residence can become destiny (Orfield, 2014), which connects to our next section regarding the city where we conducted our studies. All facets of Fraser's (1997) social justice framework and justice-related discourse relate to Latinx immigrant parental involvement because of obstacles parents face and parents' attempts to be fully involved in their children's education.

Yet, justice relates to discourse as well – historically-rooted, power-laden, outrageous (Fraser, 2008). Discourse – socially-constructed and subjective – excludes and includes people (Foucault, 1972). Fraser stated that critically theorizing justice as multidimensional and discursive can "reveal contemporary injustices for the moral outrages they surely are" (p. 422). Fraser's 2008 addition of justice as discursive moves us from the binaries she set forth in her 1997 book (access/barrier, representation/underrepresentation, and recognition/nonrecognition). Thus, Fraser's 1997 and 2008 notions of justice allow us to consider the three Rs of justice alongside the discourse of power, which permeates all facets of life. Moreover, everyone possesses power. These Foucauldian concepts of power help us to re/construct normative beliefs about nondominant parents and contextualized truths and to see that parents do resist hegemonic forces (Foucault). As teacher educators, we hear and read about (and contest) the discourse of uninvolved Latinx immigrant parents from our local Latinx pre-service and in-service teachers, who have internalized this marginalizing, deficit discourse. Hernández (2003) and Murillo (2012) critiqued this normalizing discourse about parents in our region. Moreover, power, related to justice, can be negative and positive (Foucault), as minoritized parents can engage in resistant practices.

## METHODS

### Site

Our studies have taken place since 2007 in a South Texas border city with a 93% Latinx population and about 175,000 inhabitants (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Youth and families in our border city, rich

in language and culture, have faced historical and political marginalization regarding Spanish and indigenous languages; English has operated as the high-powered language in schools (Anzaldúa, 2007; Murillo, 2012). Much relates to high-stakes testing in English for emergent bilingual children (Hinton, 2015; Smith & Murillo, 2012), and attempts to tame wild tongues (Anzaldúa).

The high school graduation rate for adults over 24 years of age in this city was 63% and the per capita income was \$14,000; 36% of residents live in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Data collection for our ten-year-study took place in a community-based after-school tutorial agency (located on church grounds). Díaz' two studies took place in the homes of participating parents and in her university office. The tutorial agency and parents' homes were located in neighborhoods with predominantly first-generation Mexican and Central American immigrants. These neighborhoods are among the most economically disadvantaged in our city.

### Participants

Our participants (189 total) were 60 female parents, five male parents (ages 30-71), four female staff members (ages 20-56) of a non-profit tutorial agency, and 120 public-school children (ages 6-15, grades first to tenth, and 72 females and 48 males). Children voluntarily attended the tutorial center for homework help; college students and the children's parents assisted the youth. Sixty-three were recent-immigrant parents from Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala, who spoke Spanish as a mother tongue and were economically disadvantaged. Most parent participants reported attending non-U.S. schools before arriving in the USA. One parent (Díaz' college student) was a second-generation immigrant of Mexican heritage; Díaz recruited him through another study related to parental involvement. All participating parents had children who attended U.S. schools; most children were U.S. born. Tutorial staff were of Mexican descent. Bussert-Webb recruited parents, tutorial children, and tutorial agency staff through an after-school tutorial program with which Bussert-Webb and Díaz volunteered. Díaz recruited parent interviewees for her first study through a kindergarten teacher, who recommended recent immigrant parents of former students. Díaz recruited pre-service teachers for her second study, but chose one Latinx parent as a focal participant. All respondents signed assent and/or consent forms before we collected data in all of our studies, under institutional review board (IRB) approval.

Although we report all findings from an analysis of all data, we highlight three key participants:

- Dara, middle-aged, mother of four, and a part-time *promotora de salud* [health promoter], who held a high school diploma in Mexico. She is a first-generation immigrant from Mexico.
- Eusebio, in his 70s, father of five children (all college graduates) and a full-time gardener and repair-person, with no high school education. He is a first-generation immigrant from Mexico.
- Galileo, in his 30s, pre-service science teacher, college junior, and father of two young boys. He is a second-generation immigrant who discussed in detail the role of his first-generation father from Mexico.

### Data Sources and Procedures

We gathered data through semi-structured interviews, college and program questionnaires, and participant observations. We conducted child interviews at the after-school tutorial agency, a non-government agency (NGO). Díaz' parent interviews occurred in the parents' homes; the interview with the college

student took place in Díaz' university office. A sample child interview question was, "What have been your experiences with reading at home from the time you can remember?" A sample parent interview question was, "How have you been involved with your children education?" Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed and lasted between 30 to 60 minutes, depending on depth of response.

All questionnaires were hard copies and took about 10 to 15 minutes to complete, depending on depth of responses. Parents affiliated with the after-school tutorial center completed questionnaires related to college and the tutorial program. All parents completed the questionnaires in Spanish, although English versions were available. The parent college questionnaire had 10 open- and close-ended questions. A question was, "¿Cuál es la probabilidad que Ud. va a asistir a la universidad? Haz un círculo alrededor de uno: 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%. ¿Por qué? [What do you think is the likelihood that you will go to college? Circle one: 25%, 50%, 75%, 100%. Why?]. The eight-question program questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions about the tutorial program and parent involvement. A question was, "¿Cómo ha enseñado a su hijo/a o hijos/hijas a leer y escribir en español?" [How have you taught your child/children to read and write in Spanish?]

Tutorial staff completed program questionnaires different from those which parents completed; these staff questionnaires had six open-ended questions. A staff question was, "What are ways you have noticed that the parents of tutorial children are supportive of their children's education?"

Additionally, we conducted participant observations through field notes. Bussert-Webb and Díaz volunteered at the tutorial agency during data collection. Their focus was on the interaction between parents and children. Díaz visited parents' homes for interviews; she focused on children's artifacts she saw in the homes, e.g., children's art, school work, and literacy materials. Children were not present during Díaz' visits, but parents shared artifacts and Díaz took note of other literacy and school materials she saw in the homes. The varied participant types (tutorial staff, parents, and children) and varied data sources helped us to establish trustworthiness. We also engaged in member-checking after interviews. Immediately after each interview, we read aloud what we typed and asked interviewees for changes, additions, or deletions.

### Data Analysis

Using an inductive approach, we analyzed all data with the grounded theory method; we looked for patterns across data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). We started by reading all data and jotting down initial thoughts. After rereading our data and initial ideas, we began to identify themes vis-à-vis our research question and social justice framework (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). We also looked for similar and dissimilar (anomalous) data to ensure we considered all perspectives from participants and the extant literature. This helped us to establish trustworthiness.

Initial themes were homework/school project involvement, extracurricular involvement, and language and literacy involvement. However, as we continued to reread all data several times, we realized the broader theme was academic involvement. This theme related to homework support, concern for children's grades and school behavior, taking their children to and from the after-school tutorial agency, and language and literacy teaching at home. Although we saturated each finding and had many quotes for each theme, we chose key quotes to highlight our results.

## FINDINGS

Participating parents demonstrated active academic involvement at home, in their neighborhood, and school, and a passion for their children's educational attainment. Tutorial staff and children participants confirmed these findings. Major emerging themes, from an analysis of all data, were these types of involvement: academic, social skills, school volunteerism, extracurricular activities, community, and college enrollment. Another emerging theme was obstacles, as parents expressed hindrances to involvement in their children's academic lives.

### Academic Involvement

The first emerging theme was academic involvement, demonstrated through parental assistance with homework, parents' concern for their children's grades and school behavior, taking their children to the tutorial agency and extracurricular school activities, and helping their children with language and literacy development. The types of academic involvement demonstrated parents' clever and imaginative use of resources. For example, although most parents could not read in English, they learned how to decipher their children's homework summary sheets and report cards in English. They ensured their children's homework was complete by using page numbers and chapter numbers versus English words (Bussert-Webb et al., 2017). Furthermore, if the teachers assigned books in English, the parents would create stories in Spanish based on the illustrations. See also Díaz and Bussert-Webb (2017).

When asked how they supported their child academically, parents mentioned giving their children rewards for good grades and punishment for poor grades and bad school behavior (taking away phones and electronics and limiting TV privileges). One mother made her children do extra household chores as punishment for low grades or if teachers complained about her children.

When asked on the college questionnaire about supporting her children academically, another mother replied, "*Les ayudo y también les mando al tutorio [sic]*" [I help them and I also send them to the tutorial center]. Other participants echoed that sending their children to the tutorial agency constituted a parental support for their children's education. A mother wrote this in the comment section of the program questionnaire to demonstrate her gratitude for the tutorial center and her concern for her children's education, "*Gracias por el programa por venir [sic] a ayudar a nuestros niños y preocuparse por ellos muchas gracias que dios los bendiga*" [Thanks for the program, for coming to help our children and for taking care of them. Thank you very much and God bless you].

Yet parents' academic involvement went beyond homework assistance, reward and punishment, and ensuring their children received extra support through tutorials. Galileo, a pre-service teacher majoring in science, now a parent of two boys, discussed how his father helped with a science fair project when Galileo was an elementary-level student. Galileo was determined to follow his father's parental involvement model. Galileo described his father as a retired "shrimper" (a person who catches shrimp for a living) and one without much formal education. However, Galileo's father became the impetus for Galileo getting honorable mention at a science fair and majoring in science eventually. This parental involvement started as Galileo and his father tinkering on cars and other machines outside and spending time together. Galileo stated, "... And I did a lot of outside work with my dad um so, we, took apart electronics and car parts. And you know, I got some wood from my dad, a boat from my dad, and we put this thing together ..."

Galileo explained how his father, who struggled financially with seasonal jobs on fishing boats (about six months a year), ensured that encyclopedias were available for his children to use. Galileo used this resource at home to learn more about inventions for his science fair project. Galileo also mentioned that his father encouraged him to enter the science fair competition and was proud of Galileo's efforts in the science fair,

*It was actually a brochure I took home and he's just like, "Hey son, why don't you enter it?" You know? ... And back in the day there was [sic] encyclopedias. There was no Internet, so I got to an encyclopedia that my dad had. He had a whole stack of them, and I got to one and reading, reading, reading, and I did an electromagnetic crane. And then I got honorable mention so you know, my dad was really proud.*

Galileo's father modeled and supported Galileo's literacy development through buying the encyclopedias and giving his son unlimited access to them and acting on the science fair brochure. We found this literacy support throughout all data. Parents were involved academically regarding teaching their children reading and writing skills English. Most parents mentioned in their tutorial program questionnaires that they taught their children to read and write in Spanish and some in English. A few mothers stated that they tried teaching their children bilingually. See also Durand (2010) regarding how Latinx mothers of kindergarten youth provided academic and literacy practice for their children.

Like Galileo's father who bought encyclopedias as a resource for his children, other parents used the linguistic resources of older children, who were language brokers and knew both English and Spanish. This human language resource may be invisible to policymakers and some educators (Orellana, 2009). One mother taught her younger child Spanish and asked her older son for English support, "*Trato de enseñarle los números o las letras (en español) y luego para que entienda su hermano, se lo dise [sic] en inglés*" [I try to teach him the numbers or the letters in Spanish. To ensure he understands, his older sibling repeats the information in English]. Another mother taught her children Spanish, but she also involved her older child to assist with English homework because she did not know English,

*Ellos hablaban español, y entraron aquí al Kinder y ya empezaron con el inglés, pero el español, siempre yo le he dado el español y la más grande es la que ahora me traduce. A ella le dan puro inglés, nada de español, y unas palabras, sí se les olvida a ellos, y "Ma, ¿qué quiere decir esto?" Y yo o mi esposo le decimos" [They (her children) spoke Spanish, but once they entered kindergarten, they receive school instruction in only English. Yet I continue with Spanish at home. Also, my older daughter helps me with the translations. She does not receive any instruction in Spanish at school, and so they start forgetting some words. She asks me, "Mom, what does it mean?," and my husband or I tell her].*

Ironically, Spanish has become a foreign academic language for our local high-school and college students to learn after it is cut out of them – like a wild tongue – in elementary and high schools (Anzaldúa, 2007; Murillo, 2012). Despite obstacles, parents persist in teaching their children Spanish. Tapping into older children to help younger siblings and parents is an important cultural practice in immigrant Latinx homes involving language brokering (Orellana, 2009). This triadic language relationship between parents and older and younger children also connects to familism, in which people with different interests and activities are bound together in a home (Zinn, 1982). Furthermore, both sets of parents used the children's mother tongues to teach reading and writing. Teaching children to read and write in their mother tongue, in this case, Spanish, helps these youth with academic achievement in the

additional language, e.g., English (Chuang, Joshi, & Dixon, 2012; Goldenberg, 2008; Thomas & Collier, 2003). This biliteracy also translates into high math and reading scores in high school college success (Lutz, 2016). Similarly, Bernal (2001) found that most Chicana college participants felt that their bi-/polylingualism helped them academically, socially, and professionally.

In our research, a father in his thirties explained how he and his wife plan to help their little girl to learn English literacy through children's TV programs and Apps, often limited resources for parents in poverty,

*Yo le digo a mi esposa que ahora que la beba este más grande, una forma muy fácil de aprender inglés es como aprenden los niños chiquitos, Sesame Street, puras caricaturas, y A, B, C, D. Y así es como vas aprendiendo. En la "computer" le había sacado un programa también, y le enseñábamos como pronunciar la palabra... pero ahorita como no tengo Internet aquí, no hemos practicado tampoco [I tell my wife that now that our baby is growing, the easiest way to learn English is how little kids do, Sesame Street, cartoons, the A, B, C, D... This is how you learn. We had also downloaded a program in the computer and we taught our girl how to pronounce the words... But now we do not have Internet at home and we could not practice lately].*

Some parents expressed interest in learning English to help their children academically. A mother shared her goal to learn English, "Pues yo creo que tengo que motivarme más para aprenderlo (el inglés)" [I believe I have to motivate myself to learn English]. This mother described her experience learning English with her children, "Lo que no me había dado cuenta que quizás sí, he ido aprendiendo con ellos, con las tareas que los ayudo..." [I didn't realize that I may have been learning English with my children when I help them with homework]. Her husband supported his wife learning English. School staff provided adult English classes at their children's elementary school. The husband suggested he and his wife alternate days for their English classes so that one could be at home watching the children, "Yo había pensado en lo que nos comentó la maestra de mi hijo ... Nos podemos turnar el tiempo de las clases e ir un día sí, y un día no. Pues yo casi la mayoría de el tiempo estoy trabajando" [I have been thinking about what our son's teachers recommended... We can take turns to attend the English classes because most of the time I have to work].

A few parents mentioned interest in learning English to help their children with high-stakes tests in English. Starting in third grade, Texas children must take state-mandated tests (Texas Education Agency, 2015). Children identified as limited English proficient (LEP) may test in Spanish until the end of fifth grade. However, most local and Texas schools practice transitional bilingual education and push emergent bilinguals to test in English (Hinton, 2015; Palmer & Lynch, 2008; Smith & Murillo, 2012). This appears the same in other U.S. schools (Hinton, 2016; Menken, 2016). Language minoritization in U.S. schools relates to the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (Chappell & Cahnmann-Taylor, 2013). Additionally, its 2015 revision, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires "annual English language proficiency assessments in grades K-12 for all English learners" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., p. 1).

It stands that as tests with major consequences to children and school staff move more to English, homework would also be in English to prepare children for these exams. Public school students in Texas begin taking the state-mandated tests in mathematics and reading in third grade. One mother, noting this third-grade demarcation, explained she wanted to learn English to help her children with increasingly English homework,

*Una de las razones es para poderles ayudar más, pues mi hijo va para tercero y va a ser más inglés. Y cuanto más va avanzando en los grados va a ser más inglés, más tareas en inglés, más cosas en inglés. Entonces a mí sí me gustaría ayudarles más. A mí me gustaría aprender para ellos. ¿Entonces, cómo voy a poder hacer yo para poderles ayudar? Pues, yo sí quiero [One reason is to help them more. My son will enter third grade and he will have instruction mainly in English. Homework is going to be in English, more things will be in English. Thus, I will like to help them more, to learn more for them. But how would I be able to help them? I really want to do so].*

As their children advanced to secondary school, our parent participants also considered the youth would have fewer Spanish-speaking teachers, perhaps related to English-only high-stakes tests after fifth grade. Starting in sixth grade, these tests are in English only (Texas Education Agency, 2015). Some parent participants noticed fewer Spanish-speaking teachers as the parents' children progressed in school. Also, many local elementary teachers are certified in bilingual education and are Spanish-English bilingual. The State's emphasis on Spanish-English bilingual teachers may relate to state-administered Spanish tests available until fifth grade. Thus, one mother said she wants to learn English to help her children in middle school,

*Por ellos, porque están en la escuela, y yo quiero entender... Más adelante, cuando estén en la "middle school," ya no podré ayudarles con la tarea, ya no sabré de qué se trata. Como siempre tienes que ayudar a tus hijos, como quiera nunca vas a acabar de ayudarles, verdad? Y ese va a ser el dilema de no saber (el lenguaje inglés) [I want to learn English for my children because they are attending school and I want to understand more ... In the future, once they attend middle school, I will not be able to help them with homework. I will not understand what it is about. We always have to help our children, right? And not knowing enough English is my dilemma].*

Despite their expressed academic involvement, parents expressed limitations, e.g., English skills, which we discuss later. However, parents also utilized many resources to help their children academically. They believed they helped their children with homework, provided rewards and punishment for grades and school behavior, took their children to and from the tutorial agency and extracurricular school activities, and attempted to teach their children Spanish, and in some cases, English. The next finding, social skill involvement, attests to the importance these Latinx parents placed on respect and social skills as part of parental involvement.

### Social-Skill Involvement

As we mentioned in the previous finding, many participating parents provided punishment if their children misbehaved in school. This demonstrated concern not just for the children's schooling, but also related to the importance parents placed on *respeto* [respect], signifying especially high regard for adults and professionals (González, Borders, Hines, Villalba, & Henderson, 2013). Parents also mentioned teaching their children how to get along with others and to be well mannered, *ser educado*. Now as a father, Galileo, the pre-service science teacher, said he hoped he could be like his father by teaching his two sons how to have good manners and to behave in school:

*I teach them love, you know, and gratitude and respect. Those are the three main things. I always wake up every morning and remind them about, "You're not going to nowhere in life without respect. That's the number goal, is respect. You got to give gratitude as well, you know. You got to be grateful for opening up your eyes, you know. You're lucky you'll be here again." So I give them comments every day. In the morning, you know, when we go to school like, they're older already, but I still brush their hair, you know, and that's one thing my dad did, you know, and I remember that vividly. Like, he would brush my hair and while he was brushing my hair, that was our personal moment before school, our, you know, 20 minutes where he was able to talk to me, you know. And that's what I do with my boys now. I'm combing their hair and when I'm combing their hair, I'm telling them, you know, like, "Today what do you expect?" You know, whatever, you know. I give them some, some pointers about how to go about today. We do little, little things like that, so I hope they cherish those moments.*

Likewise, one mother equated teaching her children to be responsible with a form of parental involvement, "*Ayudándole a hacer las tareas y enseñándoles sus responsabilidades y desempeño*" [By helping them with their homework and teaching them their responsibilities and how they perform].

Teaching their children personal and social skills as a form of parental involvement surfaced throughout our data. In the research literature, Valdés (1996) found that Mexican-heritage parents believed social-skill development was essential for their children's education. For example, one mother in Valdés' study "believed firmly that if they [her children] were going to learn anything at all, they had to learn to behave first" (p. 2). Although it may not appear in the mainstream literature as an important aspect of parental involvement, Bernal (2001) discovered that the pedagogies of the home, what children learn from their parents and their relationships with their families, helped 29 Chicana participants to be successful in college. Furthermore, social skills and related competencies, important for all, enable people to succeed in life, work, and citizenship (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2007). In fact, social skill development is part of the Early Development Instrument (EDI) to determine young children's school readiness (Janus & Offord, 2007).

Other parents stated they took their children to catechism classes and to church and that they tried to teach them how to be ethical and moral. Eusebio, for instance, got his teenage son to read the Bible aloud during mass as a lector (Bussert-Webb et al., 2017). In Bernal (2001), this spirituality, passed from family members in homes, helped Chicana university students to persist with their college goals and appeared as resistance strategies to maintain cultural ties to Mexico. In the next section, we explore how our participating parents became involved in their children's education by volunteering in their schools and participating in their extracurricular activities.

### School Volunteering and Supporting Children's Extracurricular Involvement

Some parents reported helping at the parent centers in schools their children attended and in their children's classrooms. Dara said, "*Yo trabajé de voluntaria en la escuela de mis hijos pues quería estar más cerca de ellos*" [I worked as a volunteer at my children's school because I wanted to be close to them]. Another mother mentioned how her child (a first-grader) noticed her involvement in his school. The mother said,

*Sí, aquí yo me involucro. Y estoy al pendiente de cómo le va a mi hijo. Y él también se siente seguro pues me dice, "Mami, hoy no te vi". Pues cuando lo sacan al baño o a comer, y ahí me ve [I get involved in my child's school. I always track my son's progress. And he also feels secure when I am at his school. If he*

*does not see me when they take him to the restroom or the school cafeteria, he would tell me, "Mommy, I didn't see you today"]*.

Although parents noted appreciation for volunteering in the parent center at their children's elementary schools, they mentioned involvement restricted to performing menial tasks for the classroom teachers, such as cutting, pasting, coloring, laminating, or making copies. Christianakis (2011) critiqued this notion of parents serving as help labor instead of teachers inviting parents to collaborate in partnerships for representative justice (Fraser, 1997). For example, García and Kleifgen (2010) discussed meaningful ways in which parents collaborated with teachers to teach children how to read and write in their mother tongues.

In the present study, most parents with children at the secondary level mentioned involvement only with the English as second language (ESL) teachers. Parents stated the elementary teachers were the ones who communicated with parents in Spanish more often. Again, our region has more bilingual-certified primary teachers because state-administered basic skills tests are available in Spanish until fifth grade (Texas Education Agency, 2015).

Related to after-school activities, many parents involved their children in the evenings and on weekends in extracurricular pursuits. Tutorial staff and children verified this finding. Some parents mentioned taking and picking up their children and attending their practices and events in band and sports. Some parents expressed that their children participated in band and sports, which required the parents to take their children to school for events, to attend these events, and to buy whatever equipment the schools did not provide. When asked how she noticed parental support of their children's education, the after-school tutorial coordinator mentioned that many parents attend extracurricular events and encourage their children to achieve their goals.

Additionally, parents mentioned attending school-related award ceremonies and open house; the latter occurs in our region at least twice yearly and presents opportunities for parents to meet their children's teachers. Galileo, the pre-service science teacher, mentioned his father helped him with his science fair project and attended the competition and awards ceremony. Now as a father of two boys, Galileo said he is involved in his children's extracurricular activities. This science competition was extracurricular and was not a required part of Galileo's primary-school classes. In the next section, we explore how parents demonstrated community involvement to help their children and other youth and families in their neighborhoods.

### Community Involvement

Many parent participants faced obstacles in volunteering at school. These obstacles related to inadequate transportation, social security card requirements, and criminal background checks. The school district in this city requires this documentation process for anyone to volunteer on school grounds. At a deeper level, obstacles our parent participants expressed may relate to the deportation fears of many immigrant families. Thus, because Dara and others could no longer assist at their children's schools, they worked with an NGO to form a community-based Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Dara has acted in a leadership role in this PTA and has taught other parents the importance of enrolling their children in advanced classes. Additionally, Dara has cautioned parents about signing slips from secondary schools that place low-income Latinx youth into lower-level courses. Dara stated that this tracking relates to Texas House Bill 5, which Dara explained tracks nondominant children into low-level classes and less rigorous gradu-

ation requirements. This bill is a social injustice related to redistribution or equity because it appears to create college preparation obstacles for low-income Latinx students (Fraser, 1997). Dara stated, "... *Por eso uno está luchando para que quiten eso*" [... For this reason, people are trying to repeal this law] (Bussert-Webb et al., 2017, p. 62). Zalaquett and López (2006) and Darling-Hammond (2013) mentioned low-level academic tracks and low expectations for nondominant youth as structural inequities.

Bussert-Webb marveled when Dara told her about Dara's community-PTA involvement, as Bussert-Webb had been a PTA president in a local elementary school, hoping to make a difference in curriculum and pedagogy. However, Bussert-Webb learned quickly that her local school-based PTA was to focus on fundraising and carnivals. Dara's community-based PTA appeared much more meaningful, as it pushed back against the discourse of school tracking and replaced PTA power in a space traditionally sanctioned for schools (Foucault, 1972). Dara's involvement as a low-income, first generation immigrant mother appeared as a representative form of social justice in which nondominant people hold powerful community positions and affect change (Fraser, 1997). García and Kleifgen (2010) mentioned that minoritized parents are starting to question unequal power relations in school-home relationships, "Some parents have begun to form grassroots organizations to address their schools about concerns they have regarding their children's education" (p. 101).

Parents, in particular mothers, became involved in other out-of-school activities involving education. Some, like Dara, were *promotoras de salud*, who helped community members with health and motivated people to vote. Although pre-service teachers tutored the tutorial children, we witnessed some mothers assisting in tutoring children and preparing snacks for children at a tutorial agency. Mothers also planted and weeded alongside their children and pre-service teachers for a gardening project that Bussert-Webb initiated at the after-school tutorial center. Although the gardening involved Bussert-Webb, pre-service teachers, and the children, some parents volunteered and assisted us every day.

Parents' commitment to community and family may rub off on their children. Bernal (2001) found that his Chicana college students worked hard in college so they could graduate and give back to their neighborhoods, schools, and homes, "Moreover, students spoke of their commitment to their families and communities as a source of inspiration and motivation to overcome educational obstacles" (p. 632). In the next section, we report on our participating parents' involvement in their children's college enrollment.

### College Enrollment Involvement

Parents in this study demonstrated being concerned about their children's academic future. In particular, they showed interest in their children attending college to pursue a career and become professionals.

When asked, "What is your dream for your child/children?," one mother responded, "*Que estudien mucho asta [sic] llegar a la universidad y tener un título de alguna profesión que ellos elijan*" [I want that my children get into the university and obtain a degree in the profession that they choose]. Another mother stated, "*Que los dos(hijos) terminen la escuela y que si quieren seguir estudiando los voy a apoyar en todo los estudios que ellos escojan*" [I want that both (children) complete school and if they wish to continue studying, I will support them in whatever they choose]. In a longitudinal study with minoritized, first generation college students, Dennis, Phinney, and Chuateco (2005) showed that family expectations and motivation to attend college was a positive predictor of their children academic success.

Eusebio, the elderly participant in our study, narrated how he supported his older son to become a teacher. Eusebio had his son serve as a lector with him in the Catholic Church for Spanish services. Initially, Eusebio's teen son struggled reading aloud in front of the congregation in Spanish, but Eusebio

insisted and also supported his son. Eusebio recalled his son saying, "*¿Sabes qué, papi? Yo voy a aprender el español para ser maestro de español*" [You know what, dad? I'm going to learn Spanish and become a Spanish teacher] (Bussert-Webb et al., 2017, p. 120). Indeed, Eusebio's son became a certified Spanish teacher and also received a Master's.

Eusebio had his sons work with him when he cut people's yards to show his sons how difficult manual labor was. He said he wanted to motivate them to attend college versus being manual laborers, to move beyond his educational and employment levels. We discovered this theme over and over again. Participating parents wanted their children reach a higher level than they had attained. Vega (2015) also explored how Latinx parents motivated their children to achieve academically by giving *consejos* [advice] about the benefits of education. Vega further mentioned how their parents' long hours and hard work motivated Latinx boys. Likewise, Espino (2016) explained how parents' and older family members' *consejos* motivated Mexican-heritage women pursuing doctoral degrees. Parents in both studies used their own difficulties with low-paying jobs in the USA to propel their children forward, to go beyond what the parents had achieved.

Some of our parent participants believed that having their children involved in the military was a way to avoid low-paying jobs. Eusebio, who worked full-time in maintenance at a local school district and then later in life as a part-time custodian and gardener at a church, motivated his younger son to get involved in the Reserved Officers Training Corp (ROTC), which paid for his son's college and saved his son from battle. Eusebio stated,

*Yo trabajé con el distrito escolar por 16 años, en el 'maintenance' [sic]. Y yo ví a los muchachos de ROTC ... Dije a mi hijo que quisiera que estuviera en el ROTC, y me dijo que no. Le dije, inténtalo por un semestre solo, y si no te gusta pero pues, a él le gusto. Pues buscamos a la universidad más cerca ... y se graduó de U.S. Airborne ... la reserva. Estuvo un año en Kuwait ... en la oficina. Era oficial [I worked in maintenance at the school district for 16 years. And I observed the ROTC young men ... I told my son that I would have liked he were in part of the ROTC, but he told me "no." I told him to try for at least one semester and at the end he liked it. Then we looked for the closest university ... and he finally graduated from U.S. Airborne... the reserve. He was in Kuwait for a year... in the office] (Bussert-Webb et al., 2017).*

In this quote, we noted that Eusebio said, "We looked for a university," which indicated his full involvement in his son's university enrollment, despite Eusebio's lack of college. Eusebio's younger son received his Bachelor's degree through ROTC and the military paid his tuition. Eusebio was engaged in his other children's education, also. He said people marveled that he had no high school education, but that all of his six children received Bachelor's and graduate degrees. He said that he participated in his children's education throughout their lives, even when they became adults, and that he was strict with them academically and socially. Bussert-Webb noticed the importance Eusebio placed on respect and discipline when he commented to her that the tutorial children needed to be quiet and to behave more.

Many mothers showed passion regarding their children's college education, also. Three mothers stated in a college questionnaire that they wanted to attend college to motivate their children. All three responded they were 100% sure they, as mothers, would attend college themselves. These were their reasons: "*Para alentar a mis hijas*" [To get my children ahead]; "*Para orientar a mis hijos que deben hacer para que vayan a la universidad*" [To orient my children regarding what they should do when they go to college]; and "*Para demostrarle a mis hijos que sí se puede*" [To show my children that yes, you can].



Likewise, Dara, mother of four, was unsatisfied with her Mexican General Education Development (GED), so she strived to obtain her GED in the USA. Dara stated,

*Ya me puse como meta graduarme este año, para antes de diciembre. Ya le dije a mi hijo que me graduaré antes que él. ...Sí, en México ya tengo la prepa, tengo mi "high school". Pero yo también quiero sacar el [título de secundaria] de aquí. ...[I have the goal to graduate this year, before December. I told my son that I will graduate before him...I have finished high school in Mexico, but I also want to get a U.S. degree].*

Dara and other mothers took every opportunity to advance their own education and job training and some became *promotoras* and received monetary compensation. Dara's children were in the audience when she graduated from the health promoter program. Dara stated she was happy to make her children proud of her achievement. When asked if they had the opportunity to study at the university level, many mother participants said yes and that they wanted to study in business, nursing, and teaching fields (Bussert-Webb et al., 2017). Although these Latinx mothers wanted to be role-models for their children, about 41% of Latinx mothers in the USA have less than a high school diploma or equivalent (Gándara, 2010). Although a mother's educational level is a key predictor in her child's academic success, most Latinx mothers lag behind all ethnic groups in the USA (Gándara & Contreras, 2009).

Similar to our participating mothers, a teen father in Vega (2015) discussed how he stayed in high school, despite low course grades. This young father in Vega's study yearned to be a good example for the teen's baby boy, "Well, I don't want him to go like 'my dad is fine without a high school diploma so I can too'" (p. 59).

Bussert-Webb had organized college and financial aid information sessions in Spanish at the after-school tutorial center since 2009. On average, about 50% of the children's parents attended these sessions, which local university staff presented to parents of tutorial children at an agency building. The high parent attendance rate is astounding because most participants had one vehicle per family and many parents worked in the evenings. Remarkably also, over 80% of the children were below sixth grade. This means that the parents were preparing years in advance to learn about college.

This finding on college involvement relates to Fraser's (1997) social justice conception of redistribution, so that Latinx have access to higher education. In their call to action, Gándara and Contreras (2009) explored the Latinx education crisis. They found that the college graduation rate for Latinx has remained has not improved much for the last 30 years. Next, we describe some of the challenges participating parents faced in their children education.

### Obstacles for Involvement

Parents experienced limitations that undermined their efforts to help their children academically. These limitations related to language differences, inadequate academic and college knowledge, financial struggles, and immigration.

### Language Differences

Many parents did not receive a formal U.S. education and Spanish was their dominant language. Thus, they could not help their children as much with homework. Hernández (2003) found many low-income

Latinx parents in our region were academically involved, but teachers did not believe this. Perhaps these local teachers (mostly Latinx, as per local school district websites) internalized the deficit discourse of uninvolved Latinx parents that perpetuates the U.S. educational system (Durand & Perez, 2013; Hernández, 2003; Murillo, 2012; Yosso, 2006). Perhaps teachers did not recognize the ways parents supported their children's education (Hernández). Much relates to the English homework Spanish-dominant parents receive. When asked why she believed the college graduation rate was low in her neighborhood, a tutorial staff member responded, "*falta de idioma*" [language barriers]. The staff member was referring to parents' language barriers because the rest of what she wrote focused only on parents.

Participating parents of elementary children reported that most of the time, they had no problems communicating with primary-school staff, because teachers, administrators, and counselors speak Spanish. However, parents of high-school students expressed frustration about their attempts to simply communicate, "*Yo les mandé una nota [to the teacher] diciéndole si me podían mandar las cosas en español, pues yo no entiendo. Pero él me dijo que no me pueden mandar, pues ahí hablan todos inglés*" [I sent a note to the teacher, asking him if they could send me the stuff in Spanish because I do not understand English, but he responded that they could not because there everybody speaks English]. Likewise, parents in Murillo (2012) reported feeling their language was not welcome in school. This language barrier that our participants reported is a social justice issue related to redistribution (Fraser, 1997). Not providing materials in a language parents can understand (e.g., homework instructions) and not providing interpreting or translation services undermine parents' ability to help their children.

Language barriers remain important obstacles to nondominant parents' academic involvement. According to Ruvalcaba-Heredia (2015), "In most of the literature about Hispanic parents' involvement with their children's education, researchers list language as the first barrier that impedes parental involvement" (p. 4). Turney and Kao (2009) explored immigrant parents' language obstacles in the USA in general and Gándara and Contreras (2009) connected this issue to Latinx parents. Moreover, language barriers, or even parents' perceptions of these barriers, relate to English as the language of power and devaluing diverse people and their languages (Anzaldúa, 2007; Murillo, 2012). This connects to the recognition aspect of social justice (Fraser). If diverse parents do not feel their language is valued in school, they may not want to participate.

In their study with Latinx parents living in metropolitan areas, Smith, Stern, and Shatrova (2008) discovered the main factors inhibiting Hispanic parental involvement were: schools' failure to send correspondence in Spanish, including the school calendar, lunch menus, and newsletters; the inability of the parents to speak and understand English in personal communication with school staff; and the reluctance of the parents to question authority or to advocate for the rights of their children. Zalaquett and López (2006) also mentioned inadequate Latinx parent involvement due to language barriers and inadequate knowledge of U.S. schooling practices. These language barriers remain pervasive and relate to the increase of emergent bilinguals in U.S. schools (Gándara & Contreras, 2009) and laws that violate diverse families' language rights. As per Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008), "... Recent anti-bilingual legislation introduced in four states and passed in three (California, Arizona and Massachusetts) reinforces the perception that there is hostility toward native language use by schools" (p. 5).

Not providing adequate language access for guardians is a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965; families who cannot understand the language denies their "right to participate democratically in federally funded institutions" (Murray, 2017, p. 11). Furthermore, inaccessibility to language for communicating with school staff (orally or in writing) denies language-minoritized parents the ability to advocate for their children and understand

their children's progress (Murray). This represents a human rights violation related to language and education (UNESCO, 1948).

### Inadequate Knowledge of U.S. Academic System

Our parent participants (except for the pre-service teacher in Díaz' study) did not receive formal U.S. high school degrees or GEDs and did not understand the U.S. academic system. Thus, tutorial agency staff taught parents how to decipher report cards and children's daily homework summary sheets. For example, parents learned that a grade of "A" meant superior, not *ausente* [absent]. Also, parents learned to focus on page numbers and whether children had filled in worksheets. When asked "What are the strengths of families in this community?," a tutorial staff member echoed how these recent immigrant parents supported education, despite inadequate U.S. school knowledge. She stated, "Our families are strong in moral values. Because many parents lack a college or even a high school culture, they value education highly." Similarly, González et al. (2013) found that although immigrant parents bring moral values with their cultures, e.g., politeness and respect, they may not understand the U.S. school curriculum. See also Yosso (2006).

Another example of our participants' inadequate U.S. educational knowledge relates to financial aid. When asked, "Why do you suppose the college graduation rate is low in [this neighborhood]?", a tutorial staff member stated, "*Por falta de información, muchas veces no saben que hay ayuda financiera*" [Because of lack of information, many are not aware of the existence of financial aid]. Through the college and financial aid sessions in Spanish that parents attended at the same tutorial agency, parents discovered college financial aid availability. One mother wrote, "*Aprendí sobre las becas y las bienes [sic] de entrar a la Universidad y como aplicar para el financioley [sic]*" [I learned about scholarships and the advantages of college attendance and how to apply for financial aid].

This finding relate to redistributive justice in education (Fraser, 1997). The financial aid presentations in Spanish by local university employees helped parents to gain knowledge about how to navigate the U.S. educational system, particularly college financial aid. Other researchers found that although Mexican-heritage parents value their children's education, they did not understand the U.S. educational system (Valdés, 1996). This relates to the disconnection between U.S. schools and Mexican communities. For instance, in Valdés' study, Mexican parents constantly asked their three children how they behaved in school and were shocked in the spring to discover that their son, a first grader, had to repeat the school year. The parents, who possessed little formal schooling in Mexico, believed that proper behavior was the most important aspect of their children school success (Valdés). Moreover, in Zalaquett and López (2006), Latinx college students expressed that their parents were involved in their college aspirations, but that their parents did not know how to navigate financial aid, admission processes, and registration. Additionally, parents in other studies showed confusion about the roles they needed to play in U.S. schools (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006). See also Gándara & Contreras (2009).

### Poverty

For participating parents, living in poverty, and consequently lacking resources, can constitute an involvement barrier. Our region, the Rio Grande Valley is one of the poorest in the U.S.A. For instance, one of our neighborhood research sites has a per capita income of about \$7,700 and a median household income of \$25,000; 54% of residents live below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Berliner (2009)

found low-income students face a great disadvantage in the U.S. educational system, which often ignores the effects of academically damaging inputs associated with poverty and other out-of-school factors.

Yet families living in poverty may find alternatives to overcome financial difficulties. One way is to ensure their children attend tutorial agencies in the community where they can get the educational resources unavailable at home. For instance, children attend the tutorial center in one of the neighborhoods to use computers, printers, the Internet, poster board, paper, glue, and markers for projects and to receive homework help from college-educated staff. One participating child told Bussert-Webb that he had to complete homework at the center because he lacked the resources to do it at home. He said, "I don't have paper at home. I don't even have a pencil." This remains a social justice issue related to access to resources among diverse people in poverty (Fraser, 1997) and ways that places and spaces (such as tutorial agencies) can provide access (Soja, 2009). However, this becomes a neoliberal issue because governments should provide for their people instead of NGOs being the main providers of resources; this neoliberal issue is especially prevalent in low-income Latinx communities (Dolhinow, 2010).

Children, such as the boy with no pencil or paper at home, also attended the tutorial center to read books. Since most of their parents cannot buy books and public libraries are far away, families in our studies took advantage of the agency's library. This tutorial library possesses over 1,500 books. Children who check out books from school libraries face other difficulties sometimes. For instance, one participating mother recalled that she had to pay a \$30 fee to the library because her daughter lost a book. Because of financial difficulties, the mother had to pay it in three installments (Bussert-Webb et al., 2017).

Parents look for other venues to compensate for inadequate printed resources. Although most participants reported not having books at home, they use other reading materials such as magazines or books that others give away (Díaz & Bussert-Webb, 2017). One mother commented,

*Ahí (en la casa) tengo revistas, o libros que me regalan mis amigas cuando sus hijos crecen ... Los maestros les han regalado libros de la biblioteca a mis hijos [At home, I have magazines, or books that my friends give me when their kids grow up ... The teaches have also gave my children books from the school library].*

Payne (2005) maintained that parents possess a poverty culture and lack motivation to help their children academically. However, our participants demonstrated that they aimed for their children to succeed academically. Gorski (2013) showed a culture of poverty is nonexistent, also.

Insufficient transportation represents another burden for families living in poverty. Some of the participating parents had no vehicle to take children to school events or the public library. Similarly, Coronado (2003) described how a Latinx family in poverty could not attend their child's open house at a far-away school because they could not afford the gasoline.

When asked ways she noticed parents of tutorial children were supportive of their children's education, the agency coordinator stated, "They walk for several blocks under the hot sun to get their children to the tutorial program." This quote from the long-standing tutorial coordinator demonstrates that many parents did not have vehicles and that they accompanied their children to and from the tutorial center to ensure their children received extra academic support. We also noticed that one mother and her teen daughter rode their bikes to and from the tutorial agency. Inadequate transportation and financial burdens also create difficulties traveling outside of the Rio Grande Valley, which prevents parents from enriching their children's geographic and cultural knowledge of other U.S. regions.

## Immigration Fears

Although some parents (such as Dara) assisted in their children's local school classrooms and in the parent resource center, nowadays parents cannot volunteer in the schools as easily. In our geographic area, parents must have school district clearances to be school volunteers, and for this, many districts ask for parents' social security numbers. Given our current U.S. immigration milieu, this presents an obstacle. As per Fraser (2008), "a theory of justice for abnormal times" is essential (p. 417).

When asked why she supposed the college graduation rate was low in this neighborhood, one staff member said that one college presentation per year was not enough to get people over their fear of deportation if authorities discovered they or their college-going family members were undocumented (Bussert-Webb et al., 2017). In the past few years, we have seen U.S. Border Patrol agents walking frequently around our university campus, adjacent to the U.S. border wall.

In May 2017, university financial aid and admission staff presented a PowerPoint in Spanish to tutorial children and parents; the presenters stressed that people without official documentation could attend college, their information would be confidential, and that they even qualified for local and state financial aid, as per House Bill (HB) 1528. Immediately after the presentation, Bussert-Webb invited audience members to complete a half-page questionnaire about the presentation. A mother of a tutee wrote on her questionnaire, "*No puedo asistir. No tengo un # social*" [I can't go to college. I don't have a social security number]. She handed the questionnaire to Bussert-Webb and said, "*No tengo número social. Lo siento*" [I don't have a social security number. I'm sorry]. The woman's written and spoken words were significant because her perception that an undocumented person could not attend college clouded her understanding of the presentation. Indeed, King and Puntí (2012) found that negative immigration experiences and perceptions dissuaded Latinx young adults from college coursework.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Our parent participants expressed involvement in their children's education. This study also revealed that our participants showed high expectations of their children's academic achievement. Indeed, Latinx parents care about their children's education and college attainment (Nora & Crisp, 2009). Based on an analysis of 3,248 national surveys completed by parents, Park and Holloway (2013) concluded that Latinx parents are more involved in home-based academic activities (e.g., homework) than Anglo parents. Park and Holloway also found that low-SES parents were more involved at home than those with a higher SES.

However, our Latinx participants felt excluded from schools often. Nondominant immigrant parents, compared to U.S.-born parents, expressed more participation barriers and thus were less likely to be involved in their children's school (Turney & Kao, 2009). Because these parents might not have sensed a welcoming, affirming stance from their children's previous teachers and schools, it is important that teachers and staff invite them specifically to the classroom and school. When we were public school teachers in the region where this study was conducted, we called parents personally to invite them to open house and to mention positive things about their children. Bussert-Webb gave her high school students extra credit if they brought any adult family member to class to explain how they used reading and writing at home and/or for their jobs. Plumbers, carpenters, and homemakers gave presentations; after these informal talks in the same class period, Bussert-Webb's students played board games with the parents and served them snacks. This was during Bussert-Webb's regular classroom instruction.

Furthermore, Rubin, Sutterby, and Abrego (2013) recommended discovering families' needs through surveys and focus groups and involving parents by creating a welcoming atmosphere and targeted events; the latter could involve gardening, hosting job fairs, and hosting music events in which families share their favorite songs in their mother tongues. González, Moll, and Amanti (2005) suggested that teachers visit children's families through a strengths-based approach and then incorporating families' funds of knowledge into the curriculum. Parents can also teach children greetings in the parents' languages (García & Kleifgen, 2010). Our findings suggest "that the grammar of justice be reconstituted so as to enable the subaltern to speak in *authoritative terms*" (Fraser, 2008, p. 422.). Certainly, low-income Latinx families possess rich language and cultural knowledge to share (González et al.).

In an interview with Martin and Mulvihill (2017), Darling Hammond stated it is important for teachers and staff to create relationships with children and families, offer translation services, and help them feel they belong. See also Murray (2017) regarding suggestions for increasing Latinx families' language access. Indeed, belonging and access are essential for Latinx children's academic success; this success happens more easily when families feel welcome (Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Murillo, 2012). Welcoming parents in an attempt to fix them is not advised (Gándara & Contreras), as families possess many cultural and linguistic gifts that can enrich classrooms, schools, and communities (González et al., 2005). Many times these strengths may be unrecognized in schools (Yosso, 2006).

Whatever path taken, we recommend that schools and districts and organizations develop clear goals for increasing collaboration between recent-immigrant Latinx parents and school staff and that they involve parents in decision-making for representative justice (Fraser, 1997). Indeed, parents, administrators, teachers, and community-based organizations have much to learn from each other (Rodríguez-Brown, 2009).

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Additional Language:** A language besides one's mother tongue (e.g., Spanish may be a bridge or additional language between one's indigenous tongue and a third language, and English may be a target or additional language in the USA for people who speak other languages).

**GED:** General education development, equivalent to a high-school degree in the USA and Canada. The American Council on Education (ACE) coined the acronym and owns the trademark. The high-school equivalent may have different names in a few U.S. states. Many states require test-takers to be at least 17.

**Latinx:** A recent term for Latino, meant to affirm transgender students. Also, Latinx (versus Hispanics) is used to indicate people who have more affinity toward the Americas than Spain.

**Mother Tongue:** Heritage language, native language, or first language.

**Recent Immigrants:** People who have recently arrived in a new country from another country and who plan to stay in the adopted country for more than a vacation.

**ROTC:** Reserved Officers Training Corp, in which high school and college students may participate for credit-earning courses.

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