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What Are the Testimonios of Immigrant Students in a South Texas Middle School and How Do Their Narratives of Schooling Emerge in Their Stories?

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WHAT ARE THE *TESTIMONIOS* OF IMMIGRANT STUDENTS IN A SOUTH TEXAS
MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HOW DO THEIR NARRATIVES OF SCHOOLING
EMERGE IN THEIR STORIES?

A Dissertation

by

JESSICA MARIE GONZALEZ

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

May 2022

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May 2022

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ABSTRACT

Gonzalez, Jessica Marie, What are the Testimonios of Immigrant Students in a South Texas Middle School and how do their Narratives of Schooling Emerge in their Stories? Doctor of Education (EdD), May, 2022, 156 pp., 2 tables, references, 77 titles.

This research follows the tenets of qualitative-interpretivist research. The study focused on the following question: What are the *testimonios* of immigrant students in a middle school and how do their narratives of schooling emerge in their stories? The stories of immigrant students' educational experiences attending U.S. schools, in particular South Texas Middle School, and their parent's discourses on border crossings were taken via *testimonio*. The methodology was constructed from the theoretical frames of four emancipatory types of frameworks used, that consisted of Critical Race Theory, Latino/Latina Critical Theory, Subtractive Schooling, and Funds of Knowledge. Five emergent themes originated from the data that included: Transnational Immigrants from Reynosa, Preoccupation with English Language, Reynosa Schools vs. U.S. Schools and Inequalities, Participation in Classes & Extra Curriculars, Narrow Evidence of Participation and Life in Reynosa vs. Life in the U.S. Escaping Poverty, Crime and Insecurity *en el otro lado*.

Summary of findings reveal that immigrant students attending U.S. schools face issues of racism in overt ways such as lack of instructional supports in Spanish, where schools privilege English, participation in their classes and extracurriculars are limited for recent immigrants.

DEDICATION

The completion of my doctoral studies would not have been possible without the patience, love and support of my family. My mother Maria Consuelo Gonzalez, my father, Macario Gonzalez Jr., my late grandmother Maria Ramirez, and my daughter Jada Allise Garcia who inspired, motivated and supported me by all means to accomplish this degree. Thank you for your love and patience.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My goal has been to earn a doctorate since I was a young adult. After earning a Bachelor's of Science in Rehabilitative Services in 2002, then a Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling in 2004, a Principal's Certification in 2008, I was finally able to accomplish this goal in 2022. I want to thank my daughter Jada for her patience while I was going through this journey and the sacrifices of time away from her that she made. I want to thank my parents and sisters for their endless support and kind words of encouragement to keep going. I am especially grateful to my mother Consuelo and grandmother Maria for instilling the gift of hard work and diligence in me. I want to thank Dr. James Jupp for his guidance, support and leadership throughout the Dissertation phase. A big thank you to Mr. Alfredo Gutierrez Principal for allowing me to conduct this study at South Texas Middle School as well as Mrs. Cristina Alvarado for her serving heart and willingness to help.

I can't forget the participants in this study who took the time to interview and talk about their experiences with U.S. schools. I also want to thank the Dissertation committee, Dr. Laura Jewett, Dr. Jair Aguilar, and Dr. Angela Valenzuela for their support and guidance with my study. My vision has always been centered around students and their experiences with school practices.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Research Question

The focus will be on answering the following question: What are the *testimonios* of immigrant students in a middle school, and how do their narratives of schooling emerge in their stories? The purpose of this study is to gather and use the stories of immigrant students' educational experiences attending U. S. schools and their parents' discourses on border crossings. Through the stories of these students, it will create a space for their experiences to be heard to adjust instructional practices. Utilizing Critical race theory (CRT), Latina/o critical race theory (LatCrit), Subtractive Schooling, Funds of Knowledge frameworks and *testimonio* as a methodology, to help take on issues of racism with immigrant students in U.S. schools will be used in this study.

Background of the Rio Grande Valley

The Rio Grande Valley is an area situated in the southern tip of Texas. The Rio Grande River divides the U.S. and Mexico. The lower Rio Grande region, throughout much of its history, was an integral part of a larger area known as *Seno Mexicano*. The area roughly included the present-day Mexican state of Tamaulipas and the southern triangle of Texas, with a boundary line running northward from Laredo to upper Rio Nueces, then following the river to Corpus Christi, and from there along the coast of Brownsville (Miller & Almaráz, 1998, p. 17). Prior to the arrival of the Spaniards in early 1500s, Native Americans inhabited the *Seno Mexicano*. Little is known

about these inhabitants, except what has been learned through Spanish accounts. According to Anzaldua (1987),

During the original peopling of the Americas, the first inhabitants migrated across the Bering Straits and walked south across the continent. The oldest evidence of humankind in the U.S., the Chicanos' ancient Indian ancestors, was found in Texas and has dated to 35000 B.C. In 1000 B.C., descendants of the original Cochise people migrated into what is now Mexico and Central America and became the direct ancestors of many of the Mexican people. (The Cochise culture of the Southwest is the parent culture of the Aztecs. (p. 4)

Furthermore, at the beginning of the 16th century Anzaldua (1987) continues,

The Spaniards and Hernan Cortes invaded Mexico and with the help of tribes that the Aztecs had subjugated, conquered it. Before the Conquest, there were twenty-five million Indian people in Mexico and the Yucatan. Immediately after the Conquest, the Indian population had been reduced to under seven million. By 1650, only one-and-a-half-million pure-blooded Indians remained. The *mestizos* who were genetically equipped to survive smallpox, measles, and typhus (Old World diseases to which the natives had no immunity), founded a new hybrid race and inherited Central and South America. (p.5)

In 1521, a new race was born, people of mixed Indian and Spanish blood known as *el mestizo, el mexicano*, a race that had never existed before. Chicanos, Mexican-Americans, are the offspring of those first matings. Our Spanish, Indian, and *mestizo* ancestors explored and settled parts of the U.S. Southwest as early as the sixteenth century. Indians and *mestizos* from central Mexico intermarried with North American Indians. The continual intermarriage between Mexican and American Indians and Spaniards formed an even greater *mestizaje*. (Anzaldua, 1985)

History of the Rio Grande Valley and Indigenous Groups

Before the arrival of the Spaniards, there were probably some 80 different Indian tribes inhabiting the Seno *Mexicano*. In the southernmost part of the region lived the culturally advanced *Huastecos*, who were the heirs of the *Olmec* civilization, the oldest Mesoamerica (Miller & Almaráz, 1998). Also, present, by the mid-1500s, were *Tlaxcalan* peoples from the region near Mexico City. In return for their alliance with Cortes in defeating the Aztecs, *Tlaxcalans* were granted privileges by the Spanish, which included opportunities to colonize the northern regions. They also took part in Spanish explorations of the Seno *Mexicano* (Miller & Almaráz, 1998). Hostile Indians raided Spanish settlers along the western boundary of the Seno *Mexicano* for over 150 years, effectively halting the advance of colonization. Finally, spurred by the looming presence of the Gulf coast, as well as by the continued Indian menace, the Spanish colonized the Seno *Mexicano* in the middle 1700s (Miller & Almaráz, 1998, p. 18).

In a historical context, the lower Rio Grande, known as the Seno *Mexicano* (the Mexican Hollow or Recess), was refuge for rebellious Indians from the Spanish *presidios* (symbol of military authority over settlers and Indians), who preferred outlawry to line under the Spanish rule. Thus, at its earliest period in history the lower Rio Grande was inhabited by outlaws, whose principal offense was an independent spirit (Paredes, 1958). Garza, Eufrazio & Jupp (2021) mention,

As Seno Mexico, what is called the RGV today remained uncolonialized for two-hundred and fifty years until the Escandon invasion of the region in 1749. Colonialized by mestizo settlers from Zacatecas and Northern Mexico, the region remained an independent farming and ranching community with markets to the South and a strong presence of thirty-three indigenous Coahuiltecan nations, a few of which participated in mestizo ranching

economies prior to the Escandon colonization. The Spaniards did not initially take interest in describing individual native groups or classifying them into ethnic and linguistic groups, major dialectic and cultural contrasts went unclassified for a long time. (p. 4)

Towards the middle of the eighteenth-century Spanish officials decided that better communication was needed between Texas and Mexico City, therefore, colonists came from settled Spanish families and settled on the Rio Grande with promises of free land and other government concessions in the colony of *Nuevo Santander*. In some of the local missions of *Nuevo Santander*, some of the Spanish padres referred to each Indian group as a *nación*, and described them according to their association with major terrain features or with Spanish jurisdictional units (Lovett, Gonzalez, Bacha-Garza, Skowronek, 2014). By the mid-nineteenth century, Mexican linguists had constructed what is now known as the “Coahuiltecan culture” by assembling bits and of specific and generalized information recorded by Spaniards for widely scattered and limited parts of the region (Lovett, et al., 2014). This term was based on limited linguistic evidence that suggested an affinity between their languages. The Coahuiltecan tribes were made up of hundreds of autonomous bands of hunter-gathers who ranged over the eastern part of Coahuila, northern Tamaulipas, Nuevo León and southern Texas south west of San Antonio River and Cibolo Creek (Lovett et al., 2014). It was the practice of the Coahuiltecan to move from one traditional campsite to another, following the seasons and herds of migrating animals. Indians and Spanish settlers lived in the same small towns and were given the same measure of self-government. As the Spanish-speaking newcomers came into the coastal region, they encountered its principal native culture. Known collectively as “Coahuiltecan” or *Coahuiltecos*, these peoples roamed the area of present-day Tamaulipas and southern Texas (Miller and Almaráz, 1998, p. 18). By 1775 in succeeding generations the Indians, who began as

vaqueros and sheepherders for the colonists were absorbed into the blood and culture of the Spanish settlers (Paredes, 1958).

By 1835, there were three million head of livestock in the Rio Grande-Nueces area with 15,000 inhabitants. It was the Treaty of Guadalupe that added the final element to the Rio Grande society and border. The river which had been a focal point, became a dividing line. Men were expected to consider their relatives and neighbors as foreigners in a foreign land. The proceeding would continue with the Mexican-American war, where Texas gained its independence from Mexico. In the 1800s, in Anzaldua (1987),

Anglos migrated illegally into Texas, which was then part of Mexico, in greater and greater numbers and gradually drove the *tejanos* (native Texans of Mexican descent) from their lands, committing all manner of atrocities against them. Their illegal invasion forced Mexico to fight a war to keep its Texas territory. The Battle of the Alamo, in which the Mexican forces vanquished the whites, became, for the whites, the symbol for the cowardly and villainous character of the Mexicans. It became (and still is) a symbol that legitimized the white imperialist takeover. With the capture of Santa Anna, the Mexican General, later in 1836, Texas became a republic. *Tejanos* lost their land and, overnight, became foreigners. (p. 6)

In 1846, the U.S. incited Mexico to war. U.S. troops invaded and occupied Mexico, forcing her to give up almost half of her nation, what is now Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and California. With the victory of the U.S. forces over the Mexican in the U.S.-Mexican War, *los norteamericanos* pushed the Texas border down 100 miles, from *el rio Nueces* to *el rio Grande* (Anzaldua, 1987). The border fence that divides the Mexican people was born on February 2, 1848 with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo. It left 100,000 Mexican

citizens on this side annexed by conquest along with the land. The land established by the treaty as belonging to Mexicans was soon swindled away from its owners. The treaty was never honored and restitution, to this day, has never been made.

With relation to mestiza identity, Anzaldua (1987), mentions,

To separate from my culture (as from my family) I had to feel competent enough on the outside and secure enough on the inside to live life on my own. Yet in leaving home I did not lose touch with my origins because *lo mexicano* is in my system. I am a turtle, wherever I go I carry “home” on my back. (p. 21)

This is a concept that holds true with students of Mexican origin as well. They carry their culture with them wherever they go as well as when coming into U.S. schools. Shouldn't this be the case with students who are Mexican immigrants as well? Shouldn't they have the freedom to acculturate to U.S. forms of curriculums while keeping their own cultural traditions intact?

Furthermore, Anzaldua (1987) mentions,

I abhor some of my culture's ways, how it cripples its women, *como burras*, our strengths used against us, *lowly burras* bearing humility with dignity. The ability to serve, claim the males, is our highest virtue. I abhor how my culture makes *macho* caricatures of its men. I can understand why the more tinged with Anglo blood, the more adamantly my colored and colorless sisters glorify their colored culture's values, to offset the extreme devaluation of it by the white culture. So, don't give me your tenets and your laws. Don't give your lukewarm gods. What I want is an accounting for all three cultures, white, Mexican, Indian. I want freedom to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails. And if going home is denied of me then I will have to stand and claim my space, making a new culture, *una cultura mestiza*,

with my own lumber, my own bricks and mortar and my own feminist architecture. (pp. 21 & 22)

Mexican-American females can relate this mestiza feminist architecture. We on one hand are told to serve our men, stay home and care for your children, be the nurturer of your family because our Mexican and Indian traditions say we as women should. On the other hand, the Anglo blood in us tells us to get an education, be liberated and get a career. This is a mestiza identity crisis that places women in such binds of confusion forcing mestiza women to create their own culture. With regards to this study, and embracing the *testimonio* of immigrant students and their parents is a form of “emerging power” that makes them “agents of knowledge” allowing them to “speak to the importance of oppression, and the importance that knowledge plays in empowering oppressed people” (Blackmer Reyes & Curry Rodriguez, 2012, p. 527).

The Rio Grande Valley Today

Similar to Anzaldua, I was born and raised in the South Texas area. In a small town of Mission, Texas, just 10 miles away from the Texas-Mexico border. In recent years an influx of immigrants coming to the U.S. has grown significantly. In 2019, about 3.2 million nonimmigrant workers, students, exchange visitors and diplomats and other representatives were temporarily residing within the United States (Baker, 2021). In 2018, 4.9 million immigrants comprised 17 percent of the population. One in six Texas residents is an immigrant, while another one in six residents is a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent (American Immigrant Council). In 2018, Texas was home to 2.3 million women, 2.3 million men, and 319,331 children who were immigrants. The top countries of origin for immigrants were Mexico (51%), India (6%), El Salvador (5%) and Honduras (3%) (American Immigration Council).

Having grown up in the Rio Grande Valley, an area predominantly populated with persons who are either immigrants of Mexico or natives of the U.S. and attending schools where Bilingual education was a large component of the curriculum, was a norm. Classrooms have always consisted of recent immigrant students who were placed in some Bilingual classes and in mainstream classrooms. In spite of Bilingual education efforts to offer sheltered instruction, these students were expected to perform at the same levels of academic accountability as their native counterparts, even without much knowledge of the English language. This caused frustrations in students, often singled out or set aside to work with at another time or by other Bilingual personnel, students faced issues of stigmas and social pressures because of these schooling practices. Having observed first hand these barriers to education by recent immigrants is the driving force for this study as these issues continue to be evident in the present. Therefore, what remains in question is how do we properly attend to these students' needs? This question perhaps may be answered by the *testimonios* provided in this study by recent immigrant students.

Why Testimonio?

My motivation and reason for wanting to deepen race-based work in education research is because of my late grandmother Maria Apolonia Ramirez Rodriguez. "*Estudien mijitas. No se queden como yo y tengan que trabajar en las labores para salir adelante*" (Get an education so you don't have to work in the fields like I must do to make a living). I remember growing up, these were the words my grandmother used to always tell my sister and I. Some of the fondest memories I have of my childhood were spent with my *Guela* Maria. My grandmother was a Mexican woman who was born and raised in a small *pueblo* in Los Cerritos, San Luis Potosi, Mexico. She came to the United States as a young adult where she married a man much older than she was. My grandmother was dark skinned, with dark brown eyes and curly, black hair. I

especially enjoyed the stories *Guela* would share with me. She said that countless times in her travels to Mexico and in crossing the US-Mexican border, Border Patrol agents would stop and request that she show documentation that my mother was her daughter. My mother was a green-eyed, light skinned, child with light brown hair. Experiencing first hand racial issues at the border crossings, it was through my grandmother's storytelling that cultivated my imagination about her lived experiences. In the present day, these racial issues are still prevalent as we continue to have more and more immigrants entering the U.S. Immigration will be a topic that will be discussed further in chapter three, under the Context of this Study section.

As stated in Chavez (2012) "Stories are the ways humans make sense of their worlds" (p. 340). She shared with me her versions of traditional legends and folktales such as *La Leyenda de la Llorona*, *El Cucuy*, *La Lechuza* and many more. My grandmother's stories were in many ways' examples of *testimonios* of her life growing up as a Mexican girl who later came to the U.S. and faced the realities of racism and oppressive experiences, trying to make a better life for herself and her family. *Testimonio* as a methodology provides modes of analysis that are collaborative and attentive to myriad ways of knowing and learning in our communities (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga & Flores Carmona, 2012). My recollection of *Guela* Maria's stories helped to frame my research perspective on social justice for immigrant students.

With regards to my research on the schooling experiences of immigrant students in U.S. schools and tying this with subtractive schooling practices, a term for a schooling practice that is promotional towards one dominant culture and that fails to recognize the educational needs of the minority cultures involved (Valenzuela, 1999), the *testimonios* of immigrant students will provide this research with examples of the impact that this notion has on their schooling experiences in the U.S. schools. "Subtractive schooling" in this study is regarded that "losing" is not a mistake,

but rather a term to explain how resources have been removed from minority immigrant students with a purpose. Using critical race scholarship, to include CRT, LatCrit, and incorporating the following frameworks: Subtractive Schooling, Funds of Knowledge and border literature will be discussed in further detail in chapter two. Testimonio as a methodology for this study will be further discussed in chapter three.

Summary

Using decolonial resources such as the *testimonios* of immigrant students can help to look at research from a different angle from the traditional Western perspective. Grosfoguel (2011) explains this idea stating, “Western philosophy privileges “ego politics of knowledge” over the “geopolitics of knowledge” and the “body-politics of knowledge” (p. 5). Furthermore, he adds, “Historically, this has allowed Western man to represent his knowledge as the only one capable of achieving a universal consciousness, and to dismiss non-Western knowledge as particularistic and, thus, able to achieve universality” (pp. 5-6). Had it not been for my grandmother and her stories I perhaps would not have appreciated my education as a result of seeing her struggles working most days of the week. I would not have known the natural beauty of the world as she saw it and perceived it, despite hardships, had it not been for her elaborate stories of her life growing up as a poor girl in Los Cerritos. Along these lines, the plan is to use the stories of immigrant students and their parents’ discourses to help inform instruction. Only by listening to the stories of immigrant students can we have a better understanding of their experiences and adjust educational practices.

I am forever grateful for my grandmother’s shared *testimonios* as they have a profound impact on my research. I value the stories she shared over the hardships and struggles she experienced first-hand as a Mexican immigrant. These types of shared experiences can be

valuable for educators, students and the community to understand our history and the progressive nation where we come from. It is important to understand different perspectives when conducting research. The same can be said about immigrant students and their discourses with their educational experiences. The *testimonios* provided will help to inform and adjust instructional practices to better serve the needs of immigrant students to help them with their educational journey. Understanding the struggles that immigrant students face attending U.S. schools will also help educators inform instruction and to reform some of practices that can potentially have long term effects on student socialization skills.

Upcoming Chapters

In chapter two more detail will be provided over the four emancipatory types of frameworks used in this study: Critical Race Theory, drawing from Delgado and Stefancic (2017), Latino/latina critical race theory drawing from Delgado Bernal (2002) and Valdes (2005), Subtractive Schooling (Valenzuela, 1999), and Funds of Knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) as they relate to immigrant students' schooling experiences. By examining some of the under-utilized assets Students of Color bring with them from their homes and communities into the classroom, this section notes the potential of community cultural wealth to transform the process of schooling. Chapter three will focus on the methodology section of this study, drawing from Perez Huber (2010). Using a qualitative approach, three types of qualitative methods will be discussed in this study: narrative, critical narrative and *testimonio*. *Testimonio* will be the main source of inquiry. Interviews with four immigrant Mexican students and their schooling experiences will be conducted at South Texas Middle School. Also, *testimonio* interviews from immigrant students' parents will be included over their border crossing experiences and perspectives over their children's education. Findings from student interviews will include

discourses facing immigrant students and possible subtractive schooling experiences, including difficulties with loss of native language, social relations issues and segregation.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the literature review section of this study. From a critical emancipatory research paradigm with a focus on immigrant Mexican students and their schooling experiences, this chapter will initiate with a brief background of Emancipatory research as a leading framework, that will open up to the following four emancipatory types of frameworks used in this study: Critical Race Theory, Latino/Latina Critical Theory, Subtractive Schooling, and Funds of Knowledge as they relate to immigrant students' schooling experiences and a section on a Social Fiction Story, a closing with a summary and final thoughts. Critical race theory and Latino/Latina critical race theory will be used as a theoretical tool to understand racial issues of schooling practices towards immigrant students. The subtractive schooling framework will present literature on what adversarial consequences of schooling practices can have towards immigrant students. The funds of knowledge framework serve as a theoretical guide to understanding how household knowledge helps to inform instruction.

Emancipatory Research Frameworks

With emancipatory frameworks, rationality not only becomes the means by which we can understand individual behavior, cultures, and forms of life but also offers the means by which we can judge different forms of life (Benton & Craib, 2011). Critical theory presents a very different

way of thinking about rationality. This can inform quantitative and qualitative research. Critical theory has a direct line of descent from Hegel (idealist philosopher) through Marx (empiricist philosopher). There is also the work of Habermas to consider when looking at emancipatory interest. Critical rationality is a form of dialectical thinking. Dialectical thinking is built on opposites. Dialectical thinking only comes into play when we talk about ideas and about human actions and relations. Thus, leading to the concept of *emancipatory* interest, which is a reflexive interest that we have in understanding ourselves and our ways of thinking about the world which provides us with the possibility of autonomy as well as the possibility of reflexively understanding the existence of these interests (Benton & Craib, 2011). There is also the work of Habermas to consider when looking at emancipatory interest. Habermas says:

Human beings are of course producers, and we have a *technical* interest in controlling and manipulating the objects around us. There is a *practical* interest in being able to communicate with others. This enables cooperation to the mutual benefit of everybody and this gives rise to hermeneutic science, the sciences of understanding. And there is a third interest, a *reflexive* interest that we have in understanding ourselves and our ways of thinking about the world which provides us with the possibility of autonomy as well as the possibility of reflexively understanding the existence of interests. (Benton & Craib, 2011, p. 115)

Habermas's example of an emancipatory science in a nutshell is describing psychoanalysis working at three levels, *technical*, *practical* and *emancipatory*. It is important because it takes us to two central arguments. As noted in Benton & Craib (2011),

One argument is that there are different types of and levels of scientific activity beyond the straightforward distinction between human and natural science, and that these can

coexist together. Second, it is our first explicit encounter with philosophical anthropology, a theory of human nature. (p. 115)

Habermas' part in critical theory attempts to elaborate that human beings were more than collective producers, forever transforming their environment and therefore transforming themselves. This emancipatory interest takes us back to critical theory. To achieve autonomy, we need to know about the objects in our world, we need to be able to understand the people around us, and we need to be able to understand what we ourselves are doing (Benton & Craib, 2011). With relation to this study there is an emancipatory interest in looking at immigrant students and their perceptions towards their schooling experiences. The idea is to get a better picture of their discourses with race and class as it relates to their educational experiences. The following frameworks are emancipatory in nature.

Critical Race Theory Framework

Critical race theory (CRT) is the first guiding framework to this study. CRT is a movement, a collection of activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Furthermore, Bernal and Stefancic (2017) express that CRT questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law. Critical race theory uses knowledge and experience to challenge power and "common sense" understandings of history and the present that are held in place by institutionalized oppression (Chapman, 2007). Critical theory refers to "common sense" as an inherent set of generally held assumptions and beliefs common to a given society" (Chapman, 2007, p. 225). As is the case of immigrant students from Mexico attending US schools, where

there is a tendency for these students to be faced with educational challenges because of their race.

Similar to “common sense” is the notion of the “majoritarian tale” in critical race theory. This majoritarian tale, Chapman (2007) says is the “grand narrative or stories told by the power bloc that promotes the interests of whites who accrue and maintain power and privileges often at the expense of subordinate groups” (p. 225). Furthermore, critical theory and critical race theory (CRT) aim to increase political solidarity by negating “common sense” and the “majoritarian tale” and replacing these understandings with the stories and perspectives of various under-served groups (Chapman, 2007, p. 226). In support Delgado Bernal (2002) in her article demonstrates how CRT and Latina/Latino critical theory (LatCrit) give credence to critical race-gendered epistemologies that recognize students of color as holders and creators of knowledge (p. 107). Critical race theory much like multicultural education “Insists that students be viewed both as individuals and as members of race, gender, class, and sexuality groups that offer differing cultural perspectives and influence their human experience” (Chapman, 2007, p. 225).

Critical race theory began as a movement in the law. The late Derrick Bell, a visiting professor of law at New York University, became the movement’s intellectual father figure. He was most famous for his interest-convergence thesis, Bell authored many of CRT’s foundational texts (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT focuses on several central tenets that include the notion that (a) racism and its ensuing power relations over subjugated peoples are common facets of life in the United States, (b) individual and community identities are informed by complex, multilayered contingencies like race, class, gender, sexual orientation, immigration, and able and non-able bodiedness, and (c) counterstorytelling is important to make sense and act upon the experiences of marginalized people. With relation to this study and the notion of subtractive

schooling in U.S. schools, feedback by immigrant students via *testimonio* will serve as the main source of data collection to gather student perspectives of their schooling experiences.

Delgado and Stefancic (2017), describe the first tenet, “ordinariness”, meaning that racism is difficult to address or cure because it is not acknowledged. In other words, ordinariness means that racism is normal. Furthermore, color-blind, or “formal,” conceptions of equality, expressed in rules that insist only on treatment that is the same across the board, can thus remedy only the most blatant forms of discrimination (pp. 8-9). CRT challenges liberal ideology that has only served to further entrench the normative supremacy of Whiteness (Aleman & Aleman, 2010).

The second tenet, sometimes called the “interest convergence”, adds a further dimension. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2017), “because racism advances the interests of both white elites (materially) and working-class whites (psychically), large segments of society have little incentive to eradicate it” (p. 9). Interest-convergence, a concept advanced in critical race theory, first conceptualized by Bell (1980), this principle proposes that change benefitting people and communities of color only occurs when those interests also benefit Whites (cited in Aleman, & Aleman, 2010, p. 2). Bell (1980) argued that civil rights advances for blacks always seemed to coincide with changing economic conditions and the self-interest of elite whites (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). With regards to this study on immigrants and their schooling experiences the interest convergence factor comes into play as when it benefits the majority of students with the guise of servicing the immigrant students. For example, the hiring of extra staff members and purchasing academic resources to work with recent immigrant students. In addition, also using these resources to work with other at-risk students who are not recent immigrants.

The third tenet of critical race theory, the “social construction” thesis, holds that race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they

correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 9). This third aspect values experimental knowledge, multiple perspectives of history, and racialized hierarchical phenomena as sources of fulfillment and communal empowerment (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Immigrant students because they were born in Mexico and new to the U.S. are products of racial discrimination amongst their peers and the overall school environment because of their birth place and limited English proficiency.

The fourth tenet gives focus to counterstorytelling (theme to CRT), a methodological tool used by critical race scholars to reclaim, recover, and provide a space for the voices of disenfranchised people (Aleman & Aleman, 2010). Delgado and Stefancic (2017) mention,

Critical race theorists have built on everyday experiences with perspective, viewpoint, and the power of stories and persuasion to come to a deeper understanding of how Americans see race. They have written parables, autobiography, and “counterstories” and have investigated the factual background and personalities, frequently ignored in the casebooks, of well-known cases such as *Plessy v. Ferguson* (the separate-but-equal case). In Latino society, picaresque novelists made sly fun of social convention, puffed-up nobility, and illegitimate authority. Although some writers criticize CRT for excessive negativity and failure to develop a positive program, legal storytelling and narrative analysis are clear-cut advances that the movement can claim. (pp. 45-46)

The hope is that well told stories describing the reality of black and brown lives can help readers to bridge the gap between their worlds and those of others. Engaging stories can help us understand what life is like for others and invite the reader into a new and unfamiliar world. In support, Reyes and Rodriguez, (2012) include,

The use of personal narratives in U.S. -based scholarship in the areas of critical race theory, Chicana and Chicano Studies, and other critical studies is informed by the practice of *testimonio* as a legacy of reflexive narratives of liberation used by people throughout the world. (p. 525)

As is the case with this study, it is my hope that by delivering the stories of immigrant students and their schooling experiences via *testimonio* in US schools, we can form a better understanding of the funds of knowledge that students bring into the classroom. These personal narratives told by students will also help the reader have a better understanding of the discourse facing immigrant students.

A fifth theme gives pre-eminence to the idea of intersectionality, a concept that acknowledges race is just one of the many social forces shaping identity that functions oppressively (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT insists on “intersectional” critiques of all such power relations and hierarchies, leading the theory to apply to many, and often, overlapping marginalized groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). “Intersectionality” means the examination of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation and how their combination plays out in various settings (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 58). These categories and still others can be separate disadvantaged factors (i.e. female and black). Delgado and Stefancic (2017) include that,

Many races are divided along lines of socioeconomic status, politics, religion, sexual orientation, and national origin, each of which generates intersectional individuals. Even within groups that are seemingly homogenous, one finds attitudinal differences.

Categories and subgroups are not just matters of theoretical interest. How we frame them determines who has power, voice, and representation and who does not. Perspectivalism, the insistence on examining how things look from the perspective of individual actors,

helps us to understand the predicament of intersectional individuals. It can enable us to frame approaches that may do justice to a broad range of people and avoid oversimplifying human experience. (pp. 62-63)

Furthermore, Delgado and Stefancic (2017) add,

A related critical tool that has proven useful in this respect is the notion of multiple consciousness, which holds that most of us experience the world in different ways on different occasions, because of who we are. The hope is that if we pay attention to the multiplicity of social life, perhaps our institutions and arrangements will better address the problems that plague us. (p. 63)

It is also my hope that as a school system, consideration of immigrant students' diverse backgrounds is considered. Students may bring with them several categories of intersectionality and experiences that can be capitalized on in the classroom with background knowledge.

In relation to this study on immigrant students, critical race theory helps to uncover the relationship that race, and racism has on immigrant students in terms of their education while attending US schools. The aim of this study is to incorporate the support of critical race theory to better understand the experiences of immigrant students and challenge the majoritarian ways of schooling practices. Subordinate groups often go through systems of oppression that the dominant race does not have to. As is the case with minority students, they often are subjected to less than optimal opportunities in schools. Further details will be discussed further in the section Subtractive Schooling.

Latino/Latina Critical Theory

Not only has critical race theory animated and advanced the law's discourse on race matters, it also has helped to diversify this discourse: CRT has ensured (for the first time in American history) that law review race scholarship is produced and published in significant or mainstream venues by scholars self-identified with subordinated racial groups and perspectives (Valdez, 1996). In doing so, CRT has ensured that this expanded written record on race, law, and society includes the experiences, "stories" and insights of marginalized "voices" and communities (Valdez, 1996, p. 3). Latina/Latino critical theory (LatCrit) is similar to CRT. However, LatCrit is concerned with a progressive sense of coalitional Latina/Latino panethnicity, and it addresses issues often ignored by critical race theorists (Delgado Bernal, 2002). LatCrit is a theory that elucidates Latinas/Latinos' multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Furthermore, LatCrit is a theory that has a tradition of offering a strong gender analysis so that it "can address the concerns of Latinas in light of both our internal and external relationships in and with the worlds that have marginalized us" (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 108.) LatCrit is conceived as an anti-subordination and antiessentialist project that attempts to link theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and the academy with the community (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Most recently, LatCrit theory and praxis have expanded beyond the United States to investigate in coalitional ways the comparative, transnational patterns of subordination reflected in local as well as global contexts (Valdes, 2005). A distinctive feature of LatCrit theory and praxis is community-building based on shared principles, ethics, practices and aspirations: LatCrits work both to create scholarship and activism through community and to create community through scholarship and activism (Valdes, 2005). What, then, is 'LatCrit'? According to Valdes (2005),

The name combines two signifiers, one focused on a social identity and the other on an analytical stance: 'Lat' stands for 'Latinas/os' and 'Crit' stands for 'critical'. When the two are put together, 'LatCrit' stands for 'Latina/o Critical Theory' — one among several 'outsider' strands of contemporary 'perspective' jurisprudence in the United States. (p. 149)

Furthermore, Valdes (2005) adds,

Today, the 'LatCrit' approach to law and theory, to justice and society, includes a collection of principles and practices that have been assembled largely, though not exclusively, from two main sources: the prior jurisprudential experiments of 'critical legal studies' and associated movements; and eight years of experience with the 'LatCrit' experiment, which began in 1995. As shaped by these principles and practices, LatCrit theory, praxis and community represent individual and collective commitments to the vindication of civil and human rights globally. (p. 149)

For purposes of this study, using CRT in combination with LatCrit together as guiding frameworks, to unfold the discourse and bring to light forms of oppression that immigrant students face while attending U.S. schools will be shared.

By focusing on three possibilities, regarding the realm of Latina/o potential in critical legal scholarship. Valdes (1996) explains,

The hope is to promote within Latina/o legal discourse a sense of postmodernism, by which I mean a productive engagement with "sophistication" and "disenchantment" as we stand at the threshold of LatCrit theory. These three possibilities therefore are posed as

partial means through which LatCrit theory can negotiate issues of sameness and difference toward a progressive sense of a coalitional pan-ethnicity. (p. 8)

Furthermore, Valdes (1996) continues,

If Latina/o legal scholarship can help to unpack the particular legal and material conditions that affect Latina/o-identified individuals and communities in the United States, helping through this knowledge to empower and improve Latina/o positions and interests, we will have performed a great service. But if this scholarship also helps to cultivate a sense of sophisticated commonality, or postmodern pan-ethnicity, among the "different" groups of Latinas/os in American society, we also will have provided a sturdy basis for an intra-Latina/o politics of difference and identity. If so, we will have helped to foster an intra-Latina/o consciousness as a potent and enduring means toward Latina/o self-empowerment. (p. 8).

This is a goal for this study as well, to open up a sense of consciousness within our immigrant students to help them realize their potential as students and individuals with rights to a wholesome educational experience.

Working from sophistication and with disenchantment, and embracing an inter-people of color politics of difference and identification, Valdes (1996) explains, "LatCrit theory can be a solid partner, specifically of Critical Race Theory, in building the jurisprudence of reconstruction and transformation that communities of color in American society so much need" (p.8). I agree with this comment that LatCrit can serve to help disenfranchised communities to realize their potential. With regards to this study, the stories of immigrant students and their parents with the help of LatCrit theory will help to transform their schooling experiences to more optimal ones.

Subtractive Schooling

The third framework used in this study is organized around Angela Valenzuela's notion of subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999; Trang, 2017; Worthy, Rodriguez-Galindo, Assaf, Martinez & Cuero, 2003; James & Taylor, 2008). Valenzuela's (1999) work provides this study with two specific relevant concepts: subtractive schooling and de-mexicanization. Subtractive schooling encompasses subtractively assimilationist policies and practices that are designed to divest Mexican students of their culture and language (Valenzuela, 1999). De Mexicanization is defined as subtracting students' culture and language, which is consequential to their achievement and orientations toward school (Valenzuela, 1999).

Valenzuela's first central concept is subtractive schooling. Drawing from Valenzuela (1999), subtractive schooling practices continue to exist in US schools today. Valenzuela (1999), summarizes the two ways that schools subtract students' cultures.

First, it dismisses their definition of education which is not only thoroughly grounded in Mexican culture, but also approximates the optimal definition of education advanced by Noddings (1984) and other caring theorists. Second, subtractive schooling and key consequences of these subtractive elements of schooling is the erosion of students' social capital evident in the presence and absence of academically oriented networks among immigrant and U.S. born youth, respectively. (p. 20)

In this study, tying in CRT and LatCrit frameworks, the perspectives of immigrant students' and their parents, using *testimonio* will be shared in relation to their schooling experiences and border crossing encounters to create a collective community of scholarship.

Central to Valenzuela's notion of subtractive schooling is the notion of de-Mexicanization. According to Valenzuela (1999) "De-Mexicanization occurs with immigrant students as they lose the organic connections between Spanish language and Mexican things (p.338). Similarly, McCarthy's (1993) injunction to accord greater attention to human subjectivity is especially important in the case of Mexican immigrant youth, whose schooling experiences demonstrate that schools may be simultaneously subjectively additive and objectively subtractive (Valenzuela, 1999). That is, immigrant youth may acquire useful skills and knowledge but at the cost of losing significant cultural resources, including a rich and positive sense of group identification (Valenzuela, 1999). Valenzuela (1999) uses the notion of de-Mexicanization to contextualize her findings regarding the significantly higher academic under-achievement of subsequent generations. In her study, evidence suggests that the longer immigrant and Mexican American children are in the United States, the higher the drop-out rate and the increase in social problems. Valenzuela (1999) suggests that the process of de-Mexicanization is an influential factor in this achievement gap. In support, Lambert and Taylor (1983), include, "In a highly subtractive context encountered at a young age should not only slow the development of the child's heritage language but could also lead to difficulties in acquisition and mastery of a second language" (as cited in Wright, Taylor & Macarthur, 2000, p. 65).

Valenzuela (1999) in her study explains that immigrant and Mexican American youth, despite a shared understanding of the meaning of *educacion*, define their own schooling experience differently. For example, despite feeling "invisible" in mainstream, regular-track classrooms, immigrant students rarely share U.S. born youth's perception of U.S. schooling experience more overt discrimination. Nevertheless, their sense of progress and family betterment and their commitment to a pro-school ethos propel them onward. Whatever complaints they

might have about their schooling experiences in the United States, these are silenced by their appreciation of the opportunity to pursue an education beyond what would have been available to them in Mexico.

Subtractive Assimilation

The concept of “subtractive assimilation” is predicated on the assumption that assimilation is a non-neutral process and that its widespread application negatively impacts the economic and political integration of minorities (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 25). Even bilingual education programs explicitly attend to the linguistic needs of minority youth can be, and typically are, subtractive if they do not reinforce students’ native language skills and cultural identity. As English as a Second Language (ESL) programs are designed to transition youth into an English-only curriculum, they neither reinforce their native language skills nor their cultural identities. In the case of students at South Texas Middle School, they are provided with ESL supports, however their language is not reinforced, rather English is merely translated to students in Spanish. The goal is for students to be fluent in the English language. Furthermore, because of its focus on how immigrants and non-immigrants learn rather than how they are schooled, the subtractive assimilation literature accords insufficient attention to how the organization of schooling can be just as consequential to the academic progress of minority youth. To communicate this broader structural principle, Valenzuela (1999) uses the term “subtractive schooling” (p. 27). This brings the school into sharper focus and suggests that schools may be subtractive in ways that extend beyond the concept of subtractive cultural assimilation to include the content and organization of the curriculum. Subtractive assimilation thus widens the analytical scope to examine other ways that schools subtract resources from youth. Similar to Valenzuela’s (1999) study of high school students and this study of middle school immigrant students, when looking at curricular tracking,

with small numbers of college bound youth (10-14 percent annually) and the overwhelming majority of students located in the regular track program (86-90 percent annually). The “track” within the regular track program subdivides ESL and non-ELS youth, creating a “cultural track” that separates Spanish from English-speaking students (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 31). Youth in the former program are destined to be shunted into regular-track classes; ESL honors courses do not exist. Thus, after acquiring fluency in the English language, ESL youth typically experience only horizontal mobility. Since many immigrant youth have been schooled in Mexico and they demonstrate extraordinary potential to achieve in school, a system that is insensitive to their cognitive and linguistic competencies unfairly narrows their educational opportunities. The same can be said with middle school students at South Texas Middle School, immigrant students are primarily all taking regular or non- Advanced Placement classes, with no consideration of skills that students may come in with from Mexico.

In addition to Valenzuela’s original study, subsequent studies of subtractive schooling have taken different problems and contexts. These include language, social relations and segregation. Beginning with U. S. Mexican youth viewing assimilation as a non-neutral process, this type of schooling, as Valenzuela (1999) explains, is a way of organizing the school system that involves adding a second language and culture, usually the dominant one, to minority students, or subtracting the cultural resources brought to school by minority students. In this process of schooling, students learn the second language at the expense of their first language, which is gradually replaced by the second language (Diaz, 1999). According to Valenzuela (2009) she says that, “schools fail students rather than students failing schools” (p. 22). It is up to the educators to set a solid framework rich in curricular and non-curricular experiences for

students. Rather than subtracting cultural resources that immigrant students bring, these resources can be looked at as key elements in their learning process in U.S. schools.

Immigrant Achievement

In Valenzuela's (1999) study, to address the issues that students identified as most salient were in the areas of subtractive assimilation, social capital, and caring that proved the most useful. These combined perspectives helped to explain why schooling is a more positive experience for immigrant than for non-immigrant, U.S. born youth. They bring to light the ways in which mainstream institutions strip away students' identities, thus weakening or precluding supportive social ties and draining resources important to academic success (Valenzuela, 1999). Explanations for differential academic achievement among immigrant and non-immigrants are varied. Linguistic and anthropological studies of immigrant academic "success" evident in Valenzuela's study point to cognitive and psychocultural factors, respectively, that enhance their adaptability to new school settings. The linguistic literature, in particular, underscores the importance of academic competence in one's own language as a precondition to mastery in a second language (Valenzuela, 1999). Immigrant students who possess essential skills in reading, writing, comprehension, and mathematics in their own language outperform their U.S. counterparts. Immigrants' academic competence is further confirmed by findings that students schooled in Mexico tend to outperform Mexican American youth schooled in the United States. Findings from Valenzuela's study corroborate the importance of entering cognitive skills to student achievement, often acquired from their previous schooling experiences in Mexico (Valenzuela, 1999). The psychocultural domain is a broad category that emphasizes patterns of adaptation and qualities that immigrants possess as explanations for the academic success of immigrant youth. Valenzuela (1999) points out that,

Children from Mexico and other parts of Latin America are strongly driven to succeed and they adhere to traditional enabling values like familism, respect for teachers, and a strong work ethic in their quest for upward mobility add that loyalty to one's homeland culture provides important social, cultural, and emotional resources that help youth navigate through the educational system. (p. 11)

In Valenzuela's study, immigrant students' school-going aspirations are strongly related to their academic achievement, affirming the imagery of their inordinate drive. Qualitative evidence suggests that these aspirations are connected to an esprit de corps achievement orientation coupled with their prior schooling experiences in Mexico that they mostly view as having prepared them well for schooling in the United States. In the case with this study, some students had similar experiences to share of them coming with some skills from Mexico with some English-speaking ability, manual trades, mathematics, problem solving skills that they were able to carry over to South Texas Middle School. Like the students, their parents aspired for their children to have a better life and do well in U.S. schools.

Similar to Valenzuela's (1999) study recent immigrants having typically arrived in the past three to five years, typical recent arrivals are classified at both schools as "Limited English Proficient" and placed in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. Discussions with immigrant youth about their attitudes toward school suggest a need to reconsider the bases of their purported "politeness". While cultural values like respect (*respeto*) encourage deference and docility, a sense of powerlessness or a belief that they are not "entitled" to openly defy school authority just as powerfully explains their comportment, especially for the more recently arrived.

A final enabling quality highlighted in anthropological research is immigrants' dual frame of reference that allows immigrant youth to compare their present status and attainments to their

typically less favorable situation “back home.” Because these children children’s families experience upward mobility at the onset of immigration, a payoff to living in this country is immediately evident. Thus, their interpretation of their deprivation in relative terms undergirds their motivation to succeed in U.S. schools. Discussions held with immigrant students in Valenzuela’s (1999) study note that life in Mexico is much more difficult financially than it is in the United States. This informs the aspirations and also mitigates their critique of schooling since the opportunity for a public education in the United States is “free,” however unequal (pp 14-15). While their motivation to achieve in U.S. schools appears to win them favor in their teachers’ eyes, social pressures to disclaim their critique and express deference also exist. According to Valenzuela (1999), while the quantitative evidence suggests that immigrant youth enjoy more support from their teachers, the qualitative data fail to substantiate this finding. In summary, linguistic and psychocultural factors play important roles in the academic progress of immigrant students in Valenzuela’s study.

Subtractive schooling has been a common topic of discussion in Trang and Hamid (2017). In a subtractive context Trang and Hamid (2017) emphasize,

Minority students are put at a disadvantage because their first language and cultural norms are not recognized. In early schooling, young minority students have to learn in a language that they have not yet mastered (p. 3). Often, they are inaccurately defined as students who already know that language, not as students who are still learning it (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981). They are assessed in the majority language with the same procedures as their majority peers. Results, not surprisingly, indicate lower levels of achievement for language minority students (Dooly, Vallejo & Unamuno, 2009). In the end, they may be labeled academically “disabled” or “retarded.” Stebih (2003) commented that because of

language and cultural differences, minority students' real strengths or capabilities remain underestimated. (p. 3)

When subtractive schooling practices exist, not only does this impact student academics but also their social and emotional well-being. The subtractive process is described by Skutnabb-Kangas (1996), as “killing a language without killing the speakers” (p. 90).

Another example of a subtractive schooling practice that exists is that of school-sponsored silencing. In Trang and Hamid (2017) in a study seeking to understand the life of eight ethnic minority students in a subtractive school in Central Heights Vietnam. Data reveal that,

Subtractive power of the school language and the institutional milieu profoundly influenced their identity constructions for the devaluation of their language and cultural identity as a consequence of the invasion of their school territory by the dominant language and culture and the segregation and disunity that affected their identity construction through social relations. (p. 1)

In U.S. schools Spanish speaking is often frowned upon. Especially with immigrant students from Mexico, Spanish is their dominant language. These students are quickly told they must learn and be proficient in English if they are to be successful. Students oftentimes choose to keep quiet in their classrooms for fear of ridicule because they are limited with their English-speaking abilities.

In another example of a subtractive schooling context according to Worthy, Rodriguez-Galindo, Assaf, Martinez, and Cuero (2003), an ethnographic study of 15-18 fifth-grade students who are immigrants from Latin American countries, predominantly Mexico, the precursors to subtractive schooling were examined. These students were receiving bilingual instruction in a supportive environment. Students demonstrated an awareness of the pressures they will face in

the future and acknowledged they must be prepared to struggle to maintain their language and culture. Despite the value of bilingualism shown in interviews and observations, students, their parents, and teachers demonstrated awareness that this supportive environment was temporary. According to Worthy, et al. (2003), “there were implicit and explicit pressures pushing the students toward becoming monolingual speakers of English and barriers to maintaining Spanish that were not apparent on the surface” (p. 283). Students were already bracing themselves for a future that they knew would be coming soon and, in some cases, had already arrived. For example, several students expressed concern that some of their friends and relatives were “losing their Spanish” (Worthy et al., 2003, p. 283). There were several other students whose Spanish proficiency had eroded despite being in bilingual classrooms and living in Spanish-dominant homes. Indeed, more than half of the parents interviewed commented that their children were forgetting or becoming less fluent in Spanish (Worthy, et al., 2003). Students described many instances in which they had felt uncomfortable speaking Spanish. One student recalled students making fun of her and her brothers on the bus and in school because they spoke Spanish and did not understand English (Worthy, et al., 2003). This study’s findings help to explicate the conflicts that students in upper elementary grades feel about being bilingual with the dominant English monolingual culture. With regards to this study, immigrant students from similar backgrounds will be interviewed and may share some of the experiences and perspectives that the 5th grade students from ethnographic study had.

In describing a similar process, although not using subtracting schooling per say, James and Taylor (2008) include that in the case of many racial minority students, it is recognized that acquiring their education has particular challenges and that success is not guaranteed simply by applying themselves to their schoolwork. In addition, such students, particularly those who face

race, ethnic, class and gender barriers, are inclined to believe that they must “be active agents” in their schooling and educational process, and in so doing, construct the means by which they can take advantage of the opportunities and situations presented to them (James & Taylor, 2008, p. 451). In referring to institutional racism and tying in with the notion of subtractive schooling practices, Gordon, Miller and Rollock (1990) state, “Much of the social science knowledge referable to Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans ignores or demeans [members of other races and]...often presents distorted interpretations of minority conditions and potentials” (p. 14) (cited in Scheurich, 1997, p. 6). This is a good example of how the notion of subtractive schooling impacts racial minority students. Minority students have to work harder for standards that perhaps the dominant race does not have to.

In relation to this study on immigrant students, subtractive schooling is a practice that unfortunately some immigrant students face in U.S. schools. In another study that has shown that US students’ schooling experiences have been subtractive in nature is in Menken and Kleyn (2010), in a qualitative study of three New York City high schools, where the focus is on long-term English Language Learners (LTELLs) and the importance of offering opportunities for native language development in school. Findings reveal that since their native languages have not been fully developed in school and instead have been replaced largely by English, with the exception of LTELLs using oral bilingualism when using language for social purposes, they typically have limited literacy skills in English or in their native languages. Thus, the findings further support research in bilingual education theory, which suggests that subtractive schooling can have negative consequences for students’ academic performance, and the importance of offering ELLs (English Language Learners) opportunities for native language literacy development in school (Menken & Kleyn, 2010).

Subtractive schooling not only limits these students' academically but it also affects them with developing socially constructive ties to other students as a result. Most of the literature presented in the above paragraphs has to do with academics. Immigrant students are faced with barriers to their education because they are limited to not speaking in Spanish in U.S. schools. They must adhere to assimilationist practices enforced on them attending U.S. schools such as going through Bilingual programs, instruction is mostly based using English vocabulary, learning the ways of the dominant race. By social constructive ties I am referring to the ability to acculturate to the school environment. They may have difficulties developing social ties with other English-speaking peers because they feel ashamed to speak in their native language or engage in activities in school they formerly engaged in their home country such as playing outdoor games, listening to music in Spanish, dancing to Spanish music, etc. Subtractive schooling ties in with the CRT and LatCrit frameworks on issues of intersectionality of racism, classism, and other forms of oppression. These practices are not seen as accepting of the dominant race and immigrant students find themselves feeling ridiculed and oftentimes further segregated from their peers. This ties back to this study as the above examples are subtractive practices that schools have that have adverse effects on immigrant students.

Funds of Knowledge Framework

A fourth framework that will guide this study is based on the Funds of Knowledge. The concept of funds of knowledge is based on a simple premise: People are competent, they have knowledge, and their life experiences have given them that knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti, 2005). The claim of funds of knowledge is that first hand research experiences with families allow one to document this competence and knowledge Gonzalez, Moll & Amati, 2005). Funds of Knowledge is inspired from the writings of Vygotsky (1978). A major point in his

theory is how culture provides human beings with tools and other resources to mediate their thinking. From a Vygotskian perspective, human thinking has a sociocultural character from the very beginning, because all human actions, from the mundane to the exotic, involve “meditation” through such objects, symbols, and practices (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). Funds of knowledge is important to this study not only because this framework supports the knowledge that immigrant students bring into schools, but also the competencies that students and their families have to offer in a school environment are seen as resourceful tools.

Put another way, these cultural tools and practices, some which change across generations, are always implicated in how one thinks and develops (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). At a time when national educational discourses swirl around accountability through testing, funds of knowledge presents a counter discourse to scripted and structured educational packages (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). “We feel instruction must be linked to students’ lives, and the details of effective pedagogy should be linked to local histories and community contexts” (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005, p. ix). Funds of knowledge is described as a great theoretical utility in developing a systematic approach to households (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti (2005). In the case with this study, the funds of knowledge will be taken from the lived experiences and perspectives of immigrant students attending school in Mexico and the US. Stories from their childhood and upbringing will be shared as well as their parents' experiences. The information shared by immigrant students and their parent’s via *testimonio* will be a source of funds of knowledge to share with their school community.

The goal of the funds of knowledge approach is to improve and inform instruction. In a collaborative project between education and anthropology in studying household and classroom practices within working-class, Mexican communities in Tucson, the purpose of this work was to

develop innovations in teaching that draw upon the knowledge and skills found in households. The claim is that by “capitalizing on household and other community resources, we can organize classroom instruction that far exceeds in quality the rote-like instruction these children commonly encounter in schools” (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 132).

Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti (2005) report that “The Tucson Project” set the groundwork for the methodological and theoretical bases of the Funds of Knowledge project.

The Tucson Project involved extensive ethnographic interviews with households in two segments of the population, roughly falling into working-class and middle-class descriptions. This work clearly demonstrated the extent to which kin and non-kin networks affected families and households. The ethnographic interviews revealed “core” households, households (usually the mother’s) that were central to providing information, goods, mutual help, and support to a whole circle of other households. (p. 3)

Furthermore, inspired by Vygotsky’s cultural-historical psychology emphasizing how cultural practices and resources mediate the development of thinking with combining the emphasis on anthropological approaches, two studies in San Diego were the immediate precursors of the funds of knowledge project. Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti (2005) include,

In one study classroom observations and videotapes of lessons were used to analyze the social organization of bilingual schooling. We were struck by how English-language instruction did not capitalize on the children’s Spanish-language abilities, especially their reading competencies. With the teachers’ help, we experimented with the organization of reading lessons, creating a new reading arrangement in English that moved away from a sole emphasis on decoding and concentrated instead on developing the students’ reading

comprehension while providing support in both languages to help them understand what they read. We were able to show that students relegated to low-level reading lessons in English were capable of much more advanced work, once provided with the strategic support of Spanish to make sense of the text. (p.4)

In the second study, and in the spirit of continuing with an emphasis on cultural practice and how the environment mediates thinking, this study was conducted in middle schools. With the assistance of several teachers, focused on the teaching of writing in English to learners of that language. Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti (2005), featured home observations and interviews with families to document the nature and extent of family literacy.

Teachers were able to meet after observations and using this knowledge from home visits were able to make changes to writing instruction to increase student participation. The following example will depict how teachers not only used the funds of knowledge from home observations and interviews to improve their teaching, this knowledge also helped the teachers to do their own learning from homes and from each other via study groups.

We formed a study group with the teachers which allowed us to meet regularly in a community setting to discuss what we were learning from the home observations and how it could be used in the classrooms. Teachers' instructional changes included more emphasis on the process of writing and in creating opportunities for the students to talk about what they wrote, which generated more writing by the students and many more opportunities to teach. We also found that the teachers' study group served as an important "pivot." This was a setting where we could turn to what we were learning from the home visits while addressing how to improve the teaching of writing (pp. 4-5).

In recent years, building on what students bring to school and their strengths has been shown to be an incredibly effective teaching strategy. The Center for Research Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) at the University of California, Santa Cruz has developed five research-based standards for effective pedagogy (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). One of these standards is *contextualization*, concerned with making meaning and connecting school to students' lives. Gonzalez and Moll (2002) emphasize the importance of this *contextualization*, stating, "We hold that instruction must be linked to students' lives and that the details of effective pedagogy should be linked to local histories and community contexts" (p. 623). Similarly in Gonzalez and Moll (2002), in the Puente Project experience, incorporating local funds of knowledge of Latino communities into college preparation, teachers and students enhanced their practice and mutual learning through ethnographic field work in the students' home community. Involving high school students, and teachers researching their school communities, Puente students themselves also learned ethnographic methodology and researched their own communities. The teachers in this Puente study ventured into their students' households and communities, not as teachers attempting to convey educational information, but as learners, as researchers with a theoretical perspective that seeks to understand the ways in which people make sense of their everyday lives. Using a mix of guided conversation and interviewing and fostering relationships of trust with the families, so they can relate and share their life experiences. By focusing, theoretically and methodologically, on understanding the particulars, the processes or practices of life (in Spanish, *los quehaceres de la vida*), how people live culturally (*la cultura vivida*), we gain a deep appreciation of how people use resources of all kinds, most prominently their funds of knowledge, to engage life (Gonzalez & Moll, 2002). As is the case with this study on how schooling practices impact immigrant students, the primary goal is to make sense of how

immigrant students perceive their educational experiences in US schools. Experiences from immigrant students will be drawn for the purpose to gather information to inform instruction and improve practices to address the educational needs of immigrant students.

Related to funds of knowledge, recent research has focused on community cultural wealth. In the case of this study the primary goal is to make meaning of how immigrant students perceive their educational experiences in US schools. Experiences from immigrant students will be drawn for the purpose to gather information through funds of knowledge to inform instruction. In examining some of the under-utilized assets Students of Color bring with them from their homes and communities into the classroom, this section notes the potential of community cultural wealth to transform the process of schooling. CRT centers the research, pedagogy, and policy lens on Communities of Color and calls into question White middle class communities as the standard by which all others are judged (Yosso, 2005). One of the most prevalent forms of contemporary racism in US schools is deficit thinking. According to Yosso (2005), deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because: (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and (b) parents neither value nor support their child's education. These racialized assumptions about Communities of Color most often lead schools to default to the banking method of education critiqued by Paulo Freire (1973) (Yosso, 2005, p.75).

As a result, schooling efforts usually aim to fill up supposedly passive students with forms of cultural knowledge deemed valuable by dominant society. As part of the challenge to deficit thinking in education, it should be noted that race is often coded as 'cultural difference' in schools (Yosso, 2005). Indeed, culture influences how society is organized, how school curriculum is developed and how pedagogy and policy are implemented. In social science, the concept of

culture for Students of Color has taken on many divergent meanings, according to Yosso (2005), some research has equated culture with race and ethnicity, while other work clearly has viewed culture through a much broader lens of characteristics and forms of social histories and identities (p. 75). Taken together, the CRT challenge to deficit thinking and understanding of the empowering potential of the cultures of Communities of Color, leads to the following description of cultural wealth. According to Yosso (2005),

A CRT lens can ‘see’ that Communities of Color nurture cultural wealth through at least 6 forms of capital such as aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital. These forms of capital draw on the knowledge Students of Color bring with them from their homes and communities into the classroom. They are not conceptualized for the purpose of finding new ways to co-opt or exploit the strengths of Communities of Color. Instead, community cultural wealth involves a commitment to conduct research, teach and develop schools that serve a larger purpose of struggling toward social and racial justice. (p. 77)

Just as the funds of knowledge framework claims to use first hand research experiences with families the same can be said with community cultural wealth combined with CRT, by drawing on the knowledge of oppressed groups to help bring this knowledge into the classroom. With regards to this study, the funds of knowledge of immigrant students will serve to inform classroom and instructional practices to benefit their educational needs.

Summary and Final Thoughts

In closing, the focus of this chapter was on the literature review section of this study. Centering on immigrant Mexican students and their schooling experiences, a brief background of Emancipatory research as a leading framework was described, following with four emancipatory types of frameworks used in this study: Critical race and Latino/Latina critical race theories, Subtractive Schooling, and Funds of Knowledge, to include assets-based community wealth as they relate to immigrant students' schooling experiences. Critical race theory and Latino/Latina critical race theory provided theoretical tools to understand racial issues of schooling practices towards immigrant students. The subtractive schooling framework presented literature on adversarial consequences of schooling practices towards immigrant students. Lastly the funds of knowledge framework including community cultural wealth served as theoretical guides to understanding how household knowledge helps to inform instruction. The research evidence on the four theoretical frameworks described above are important to this study because they help to unfold the discourse that immigrant students are faced with regards to educational practices. The literature from this study also helps to inform instruction as the frameworks provide a progressive scholarship towards ways of optimizing learning opportunities for immigrant students. The idea is that schools should provide a quality education that will emancipate and empower all students. This can only be done if all students are provided with the opportunity to have access to a culturally diverse curriculum and have accessible school resources that will allow them to build on their origins. Schools must demonstrate care for all students and despite diverse backgrounds and ethnicities; that school staff demonstrate care and understanding. The literature described here by no means will solve the issue of underachievement of immigrants in schools, or limit the

language barriers, however it will serve as an awareness of how schooling practices impact immigrant students.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the methodology section of this study. A qualitative approach will be used, in particular *testimonio* as the main source of inquiry. *Testimonio* interviews of four immigrant Mexican students and their schooling experiences as a methodology at South Texas Middle School will be used to inform instruction and through these stories create a space for their experiences to be heard to adjust instructional practices. Also, *testimonio* interviews from immigrant students' parents will be taken to include their border crossing experiences and perspectives over their children's education in U. S. schools. This chapter will initiate with an introduction explaining qualitative research and its meaning. Three types of qualitative methods will be described in subsequent sections, beginning with narrative as a type of inquiry, followed by critical narrative, and *testimonio*. Only *testimonio* will be used as a methodology in this study. The relationship between the three types of qualitative methods used in this study: narrative, critical narrative and *testimonio* are personal stories of human experiences told by socially marginalized or oppressed persons. The later part of this chapter will consist of the sections on: context of the study, participants, data gathering, data analysis, and a summary.

Generally, the broad approach to research in this study is qualitative research. Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world

visible. These practices transform the world, they turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 10.) Qualitative research often involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials: case study, personal experience, introspection, life story, interview, artifacts and cultural texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The qualitative data collected and analyzed are primarily in non-quantitative form, consisting of textual materials (e.g., artifacts, photographs, video recording, internet sites) that document the human experiences of others or of oneself in social action and reflexive action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Accordingly, qualitative researchers use a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping to always get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In support, Saldana (2015) includes that qualitative inquiry, by nature, is a customized, inductive, emergent process that permits more of the researcher's personal signature in study design, implementation, and write-up. With regards to this study, the personal experiences and life stories or *testimonio* methods of inquiry will be used to gather feedback from immigrant students and their parents with regards to schooling practices in U. S. schools.

Narrative

More specifically, narratives are another form of qualitative methodology. Narratives are socially constrained forms of action, socially situated performances, ways of acting in and making sense of the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Narrative inquiry can advance a social change agenda. An interest in how narrative inquiry contributes to social change has been central to narrative research for decades (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

One of narrative inquiry's strengths has been exploring lived experience through a focus on personal narratives, often revealing aspects of lives previously hidden from or suppressed by social science. The growing maturity of narrative inquiry's contributions to social change is twofold. Chase (2011) mentions:

First researchers interested in the practical application of narrative inquiry are moving beyond well-established findings that professional institutions often squelch laypersons' stories to study how storytelling can change professional practices. Second, researchers are exploring the public life of testimonies that expose injustice, showing that local circumstances and broader contexts can either inhibit or enhance testimony's power to effect social change. (p. 553-554)

It appears that the term *narrative inquiry* was first used by the Canadian researchers Connelly and Clandinin (1990) to describe an already developing approach to teacher education that focused on personal storytelling (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Their work claims that what we know in education comes from telling each other stories of educational experience. Narrative inquiry is increasingly used in studies of educational experience. Narrative inquiry is concerned with analyzing and criticizing the stories we tell, hear and read in the course of work (Webster & Metrova, 2007). The main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2).

In Australia, for instance, a key player in narrative inquiry is Gough (1991, 1994, 1997), a curriculum inquiry and research methodologies researcher and practitioner. Webster and Metrova (2007) state:

Gough sees narrative inquiry as being emancipatory. He argues that the ways we give meaning to ourselves and others and the world at large sometimes happen through stories, of which we are largely unaware or which are taken for granted. Reflecting critically on the stories that we read, hear, live and tell may help us to understand how can use them more responsibly and creatively and free ourselves from their constraints. (p. 7)

Here, Gough is maintaining that we use narrative inquiry to realize how forms of discourse take effect through stories. Furthermore, “Narrative inquiry is a set in human stories of experiences. It provides researchers with a rich framework through which they can investigate the ways humans experience the world depicted through their stories” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 1). In addition, Webster and Mertova (2007), include that “Narrative is well suited to addressing the complexities and subtleties of human experience in teaching and learning” (p. 1). Narrative inquiry as noted in Marshall and Rossman (2016), “Seeks to understand sociological questions about groups, communities, and contexts through individuals' lived experiences” (p. 157). With regards to this study, narrative inquiry is valuable as a methodology because the stories of immigrant students’ experiences will be heard to inform instruction. The impact of schooling practices will serve to bring about changes with educational practices.

Narrative inquiry can advance a social change agenda. “Wounded storytellers can empower others to tell their stories such as is the case with *testimonio*” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 518). *Testimonio* will be discussed in further detail in subsequent paragraphs following critical narrative.

Critical Narrative

Specifically, critical narrative is one type of narrative that is important to this study. Critical narrative is a type of qualitative analysis that seeks to describe the meaning of experience for those who frequently are socially marginalized or oppressed, as they construct stories (narratives) about their lives (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Postmodern and postcolonial perspectives assume that knowledge is subjective and must be challenged and critiqued (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Similarly, critical theory, critical race theory, feminist theories, queer theory, and cultural studies also assume that knowledge is subjective but view society as essentially conflictual and oppressive (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Thus, critical race theorists, feminist researchers, and those postcolonial perspectives point to the exclusion of “peripheral” knowledges and truths from traditional knowledge production (Rossman & Marshall, 2016, p. 22). By means of such challenges, it becomes clear that the assumptions behind research questions must be interrogated, deconstructed, and sometimes dismantled and reframed (Rossman & Marshall, 2016). Such inquiry could contribute to radical change or emancipation from oppressive social structures, either through a sustained critique or through direct advocacy and action taken by the researcher, often in collaboration with participants in the study (Rossman & Marshall, 2016).

All of these critiques share four assertions:

- (a) Research fundamentally involves issues of *power*; (b) the research report is not transparent, but rather *authored* by a race, gendered, classed, and politically oriented individual; (c) race, class, and gender are crucial for understanding experience; and (d)

historically, *traditional* research has silenced members of oppressed and marginalized groups. (Rossman & Marshall, 2016, p. 23)

For purposes of this study the stories (narratives) of immigrant students as a marginalized group will form a basis of information to determine their schooling experiences while attending U.S. schools. This leads to the following section on *testimonio*. *Testimonio* will serve as the main method of inquiry for this study.

Testimonio as Representation

Testimonio is a type of critical narrative. *Testimonio* as emergency narratives, can mobilize a nation against social injustice, repression and violence. Collective stories can form the basis of a social movement. Telling the stories of marginalized people can help create a public space of requiring others to hear what they don't want to hear. According to Quiroz (2001), recognizes that voices in narratives represent an incredibly rich source for understanding Latino youth. Furthermore, "by giving witness to student voices, we as readers help ensure that these Latino adolescents do not just speak, but that they be heard" (Quiroz, 2001, p. 329).

Testimonio is a counter narrative that gives witness to social injustice and seeks to find a legitimate space for life experiences to be heard (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In a similar process Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Carmona (2012) uses *testimonio* in an article where educational inequity is outlined, she mentioned that "*Testimonio* challenges objectivity by situating the individual in communion with a collective experience marked by marginalization, oppression or resistance" (p. 365). Similarly, Delgado Bernal, et al. (2012) mention that "*Testimonio* transcends descriptive discourse to one that is more performative in that the narrative simultaneously engages the personal and collective aspects of identity formation while translating

choices, silences, and ultimately identities” (p. 364). *Testimonios* are first-person eyewitness accounts, narrated by those who lack social and political power, about repression, exploitation, and marginalization (Chase, 2011).

In this sense, Domitila Barrios de Chungura’s testimony contains the elements of a profoundly innovative historical analysis, because it is also an interpretation of the facts from the popular point of view (Barrios de Chungura, 1978). To this account, Domitila considers the “culmination” of her work “is the cry of people who suffer because they are exploited” (p. 9). Furthermore, it shows how the liberation of women is fundamentally linked to the socioeconomic, political, and cultural liberation of the people and how women’s participation in this process must be seen in that context (Barrios de Chungura, 1978). Furthermore, in *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios*, a collaborative and division of labor among eighteen women of diverse Latina backgrounds, this book offers *testimonios* that attest to the urgency with which U.S. women of color struggle for autonomy and survival in their journey through the formidable class system of U.S. institutions. Their stories tell secrets of how a traditional, phallogocentric Latino family structure serves as one more wall that these women must scale. The stories show how knowledge of and from their everyday lives is the basis for theorizing and constructing an evolving political praxis to address the material conditions in which they live (Latina Feminist Group, 2001). In *I, Rigoberta Menchu*, this book is about her narration that reflects the different influences on her life. Menchu learned the language of the culture which oppressed her in order to fight it, to fight for her people, and to help us understand her own world (Menchu, 1984). The urgency of speaking and being heard drives testimony about many types of trauma and injustice (Chase, 2011). Paul Gready (2013) points out that during the 1990s, personal testimony became a powerful mechanism for advancing human rights across the globe, but he urges attention to “who

owns and controls testimony within the increasingly globalized public sphere” (p. 241). Gready (2013) summarizes current research on testimony and social justice:

The struggle now is less over the articulation of the marginalized and subaltern voice than for greater control over voice, representation, interpretation and dissemination. Voice without control may be worse than silence; voice with control has the capacity to become a less perishable form of power because...it allows voice to enter into a more genuinely reciprocal dialogue. (pp. 250-51)

In the case of this study, immigrant students are provided with a voice to share out their experiences attending school in Mexico and the U.S. Using their *testimonio* is a form of voice control in a sense, as it provides these students with a platform to share their stories about their schooling experiences and these voices can also be representative of other immigrant students.

***Testimonio* as a Methodology**

Testimonio can also be used as a methodological tool. In Delgado Bernal, Burciaga and Flores Carmona (2016) they explain,

Most of the methodological and epistemological discussions regarding *testimonios* focus on an approach in which an interlocutor, who is an outside activist and/or ally, records, transcribes, edits, and prepares a manuscript for publication. Within this approach, a *testimoniolista* (someone who is giving *testimonio*), works closely with the recorder/researcher/journalist to bring attention to her community’s experiences.

Translating *testimonios* from Spanish into English includes translating culturally-specific knowledge that can shift meaning and reproduce negative connotations associated with gendered or racialized terms of endearment. (p. 3)

Furthermore, Flores Carmona (2016) further explains, when translating we become a sort of interlocutor, a translator whose knowledge of English and Spanish becomes a filter to move from one language to another and the knowledge of the languages might affect the *testimonios*. In this act, the *testimonialista* is the holder of knowledge thereby disrupting traditional academic ideals of who might be considered a producer of knowledge.

In the case of this study I will serve as the translator of the *testimonios* of the immigrant students and their parents. Therefore, I will become a holder of knowledge and through these translations my hopes are to bring to light their schooling experiences demonstrating their struggles and discourses and social effects of schooling practices attending U.S. schools. For example, in Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, and Flores Carmona (2016) mention, this type of *testimonio* scholarship places the Chicana/Latina scholar as the “outside” ally and activist who brings attention to the conditions of a particular group of Latinas/Latinos. Cervantes-Soon in her study of “*Testimonios of Life and Learning in the Borderlands: Subaltern Juarez Girls Speak*”, presents *testimonios* of two high-school girls who attend a school with a critical pedagogy orientation and are coming of age in one of the most marginalized areas of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2016). These *testimonios* shed light on their experiences and identity formation, attesting to their struggle for freedom, dignity, and life on the South side of the border. Similarly, in Lindsay Perez Huber and Bert Maria Cueva also serve as “outside” allies and activists in “Chicana/Latina *Testimonios* on Effects and Responses to Microaggressions” as they present the *testimonios* of undocumented and U.S.-born Chicana/Latina students. The students’ *testimonios* are analyzed from a Latina/o critical race and Chicana feminist theoretical lens that allows us to name some of the oppressions encountered in schools and to better understand how Chicana/Latina students respond to and heal from

oppressive experiences. Just like this study on using *testimonio* research with immigrant students and shedding light and translating these stories, in both articles, the authors hold their positionalities, address their methodology and concerns regarding voice, representation and their role as researchers.

In continuing to bring awareness to *testimonio* research, Jupp, Calderon-Berumen, and O'Donald (2018) in their study reference *testimonio* using two of the largest taproots for US based *testimonio* research in education.

The Latina Feminist Group's (2001) *Telling to Live* and Delgado Bernal (1998) and her colleagues' (Calderón et al., 2012) notion of Chicana feminist research epistemology provided the two largest taproots for U.S.-based *testimonio* research in education, both of which emerge from Anzaldúa's (1987) work on Chicana, indigenous, and mestiz@ identities. Though both taproots are cited with equal frequency in U.S. based *testimonio* research, Delgado Bernal and her colleagues, who situate *testimonio* as differently conceived of human science research epistemology, provided the predominant approach to U.S.-based *testimonio* research in education. (p. 20)

Furthermore, Jupp, Calderon-Berumen and O'Donald (2018) add:

Emerging from the two intertwined taproots noted earlier, U.S.-based *testimonio* research in education provides three distinct and overlapping emphases. These three emphases represent *testimonio* as: (a) research methodology, (b) critical pedagogy, and (c) critically re-configuring identities. As these emphases overlap, we organize our interpretation according to each study's relative emphasis and contribution to U.S.-based *testimonio* research in education. (p. 20)

In this study, testimonio will be a driving force in acquiring the various perspectives of middle school students as they relate to their schooling experiences. Similar to Menchu (1984) and drawing on her *testimonio* to tell her story about the tragic experiences and struggles for social justice as a Guatemalan peasant woman, I am choosing *testimonio* as a form of social justice research to understand the schooling experiences of immigrant Mexican students and the conditions of struggles they and their parents face in coming to the U.S. Specifically critical race theory (CRT), positioned with Latina/o critical race theory (LatCrit) to explore the experiences that these immigrant students face attending U.S. schools tying in with the notion of subtractive schooling.

Methodology

This study employs a critical emancipatory research approach with a focus on immigrant students and their schooling experiences. An analysis strategy allowing themes to emerge from data was used to reveal any indication of oppression. For this study students were recruited using a network sampling method. To identify participants who (1) recent immigrants identify Mexico as their country of origin (0-3 years), (2) ages 11-15 years old and (3) students enrolled at South Texas Middle School, (4) a parent/guardian of a recent immigrant student participant. A total of eight participants participated in this study, four students and four parent/guardians. Each student was enrolled at South Texas Middle School, met age criteria and were recent immigrants to the U.S. from Mexico with 0-3 years. Only one student participant was recruited who was a fourth-year recent immigrant, due to low participating numbers of student participants for this study. Each student participated in a part one interview over their Life experiences and a part two interview over their Schooling experiences. Parents participated in one Individual interview. In addition, a focus group meeting was conducted with only the student participants. In line with

CRT and LatCrit, the methodological design for this study borrows from various academic fields. In efforts to portray the experiences of recent immigrant students in this study as they see accurate, I offer the development of critical race *testimonios*.

Context of this study

The Rio Grande Valley is located at the southernmost point of Texas bordering the areas of Mexico such as Matamoros, Rio Bravo and Reynosa. At the meeting point of Mexico and the United States, the four county regions are called the Valley and is one of the fastest growing areas of the United States. The cities in the RGV include Brownsville, Harlingen, Weslaco, Pharr, McAllen, Edinburg, Mission, San Juan, and Rio Grande City. The RGV is one of the richest places in the country in history and tradition, it is also known to be an area of poverty. The RGV is also an area that houses a number of undocumented immigrants. With the recent surge of migrants, the Texas Tribune reported more than 144,000 migrants were apprehended and denied entry to the country in May 2019, of those Texas shelters to include shelters in the McAllen, Texas area- the largest center in America, held more than 5,800 migrant children. To deal with the continuing surge, the federal government has been erecting tent complexes near Border Patrol stations in the RGV and El Paso, Texas. According to the Texas Tribune, former President Trump's administration recently canceled English classes, recreational programs and legal aid for unaccompanied minors at shelters across the country, citing budget pressures. With a new Biden administration coming into office, changes to re-open borders, further increases of immigrants coming into the U.S will likely increase. This possible increase of immigrants to the U.S. lends itself to this study as it will be a good opportunity to get first-hand information from students and their parents about their experiences.

South Texas Middle School serves 6th-8th grade students and is part of the south side of the McAllen Independent School District just miles from the Texas-Mexico border. The demographics consist predominantly of disadvantaged students of low socioeconomic status (90%), at risk (80%), as well as a large majority of students identified with English as a Second Language (ESL) (60%), including recent immigrants from Mexico (3%). The prospective setting for the research study will be at South Texas Middle School. However due to Covid 19 and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, meetings with students will be held virtually via google meets. Meetings with school administrators prior to the start of the study will be done to explain the purpose of this research and get permission to conduct the study with South Texas Middle School recent immigrant students. Also, meetings with both participants and their parents will be conducted virtually at the beginning of the school semester to explain the purpose of this research. Written consent from the students and their parents will be obtained prior to initiating the study via electronic means. I am choosing *testimonio* in order to get an in-depth understanding of the students' experiences in US schools and their parents' border crossing experiences. The intentions are to use a qualitative lens to acquire the perspective or funds of knowledge in understanding the experiences of recent immigrant students at South Texas Middle School, in order to inform instructional practices using the funds of knowledge that immigrant students have from their households.

Participants

My interest is on the quality of student interpersonal relationships as well as active involvement in school. The population for this study will consist of a cohort of four immigrant students from Mexico who have been in US schools between 0-3 years. According to the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Education Code (TEC) 29.121, defines an immigrant student who,

1. is aged 3 through 21.
2. was not born in any state in the United States, Puerto Rico, or the District of Columbia.
3. has not been attending school in the United States for more than three full academic years.

The criteria for the selection of these students is because they are recent immigrants from Mexico and currently attending South Middle School, where I presently work as a school Administrator who oversees the Bilingual/English as Second Language Department. The participants will consist of middle school aged students between the ages of 11-15 years of age, who are identified as English Learners (ELs) and who have had prior schooling in Mexico. According to the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Administrative Code (TAC) 89.1225,

English Learners (ELs) formerly known as Limited English Proficient (LEP) are defined as,

A student is classified as limited English proficient when 1) a language other than English is used as the primary language in the home and 2) the student's English language proficiency is determined to be limited by the Language Proficiency Assessment Committee (LPAC) or as indicated by a test of language proficiency. Most students identified as limited English proficient receive bilingual or English as a second language instruction.

Lareau (1989) found that parents of first-generation respondents have about six years of schooling (Valenzuela, 1999). This factor adds to the educational divide that contributes to low average educational attainment levels among recent immigrant students. As in Valenzuela's study, the data coincides that the major responsibility for education falls on the school by default

(Valenzuela, 1999). Studies reveal that a tendency on the part of teachers and administrators to blame children, parents, and community for their educational failure, has been observed in ethnographies of minority youth of urban schools (Valenzuela, 1999). The information gathered from the stories of immigrant students and their parents will be assessed for similar schooling experiences.

This study took place at a South Texas Middle School. Four student recent immigrants and their four parents/guardians participated in this study. Two students were male and two females. The two male students were in the 7th grade and the two female students were in 8th grade. In order to protect the identity of the participants they were labeled as students A, B, C and D with pseudo names. The 7th grade male participants were labeled as participants A: Gerardo and B: Beto. The 8th grade female participants were labeled as C: Leticia and D: Claudia. Students consisted of recent immigrants attending U.S. schools between 0-3 years. Due to limited student participation, one student recruited a classmate who was also a recent immigrant, attending four years in U.S. schools. Students participated in a two-part interview consisting of Life and Schooling topics. A focus group meeting was held to gather the input of immigrant students and any findings. An individual interview with parents was also conducted as part of this study to gather their input on border crossing discourses and their perspective on their children's education attending school at South Texas Middle School. Parent participants were also labeled according to their children's names. Participant Gerardo is a 7th grade student and second year recent immigrant from Reynosa, Mexico and has attended only South Texas Middle School in the U.S. in 6th and 7th grade. He chose to have his interview conducted in English. Participant Beto is a 7th grade, first year recent immigrant from Reynosa, Mexico. Participant Leticia is an 8th grade, first year recent immigrant from Reynosa, Mexico. Participant Carmen is an 8th grade,

fourth year recent immigrant coming from Reynosa, Mexico. She previously attended an elementary school as a 5th grade student in the U.S. prior to attending South Texas Middle School.

Data Gathering

Two types of semi-structured interviews were conducted with immigrant students as a first mode of data collection. The first interview was to gather information about their life stories and the second interview was about their schooling experiences. Since my position at this school is that of a campus administrator, I had a working relationship with most students and parents at the school. Prior to this study, I had established rapport with the cohort of students I was going to be working with. With the parents, one interview was conducted to gather input on their border crossing experiences and their point of view about their children's educational experiences in Mexico and the U.S. The goal was to get subjective accounts of their lived experiences and evaluate how these ties into the notion of subtractive schooling. For this study the student interviews were conducted throughout a semester's time frame. Virtual meetings with each of the participants took place twice a month during a semester time frame, for about 45-60-minute sessions to ask questions about schooling practices that exist in school such as classroom activities, extracurricular events, school functions, etc. One focus group meeting was held with students to comment on any findings from this study. A researcher notebook was used throughout to incorporate with student and parent interviews. At the end of the semester the data was compiled and sorted into themes, researcher notes and focus group meeting findings were included in a narrative method. This narrative will be shared with campus administration, student participants and their parents. It is my hope that the information shared in this narrative will help to inform instruction.

Purpose of Data Sources and Data Analysis

Drawing from Perez Huber (2010) on her research, a three-phase data analysis process will be used in this study, guided by CRT, LatCrit, and critical race grounded theory (Perez Huber, 2009) with an emancipatory epistemology. A critical race grounded theory approach was developed from traditional grounded theory in qualitative research, which allows themes to emerge from data (Perez Huber, 2009). However, because of dominant ideologies embedded within the research process, it is necessary to utilize critical frameworks with explicit anti-racist and social justice agendas, to reveal oppressive experiences dominant ideologies mask (Perez Huber, 2010). The three-phase data analysis processes to be included are: (1) preliminary, (2) collaborative data analysis, and (3) final data analysis stages. During the preliminary phase, themes were identified in the data, using initial and focused coding strategies.

Once these themes were established, examples of each theme were extracted from the data and used to create summary points. The collaborative data analysis phase took place in a focus group environment. The group engaged in a dialogue around the themes, and how their own experiences agreed with or refuted with other group members' responses. The final data analysis phase was a focus on commonalities with responses to produce a summary of findings.

Opportunities to reflect on personal experiences and engage in dialogue will allow both researcher and participant to "see" the data in ways that we would not have seen on our own, and thus provide a richer understanding (Perez Huber, 2010). This process will also provide the opportunity to member-check (Perez Huber, 2010) and gain insight to the validity of the findings that may be produced in the third, and final analysis phase. This phase in combination with the findings of both the preliminary and a final version of themes that were then coded to produce a final analysis of the critical race testimonios.

Using traditions of critical race scholarship and *testimonio*, this study will draw on the schooling and lived experiences of immigrant students attending U. S. schools as well as their parents' transnational experiences. This study will describe the use of *testimonio* as a methodology with a focus on Latina/o critical race theory (LatCrit). This study is important because it is a form of social justice research in education. In Perez Huber (2009), she supports that in the field of education, dominant ideologies of meritocracy, individualism and color-blindness can mask the complex struggles of Students of Color and the systems of oppression that create the conditions of those struggles (p. 640). Furthermore, Delgado Bernal and Villalpando (2002) would argue,

These ideological beliefs are rooted in Western epistemologies that maintain white superiority through the production of knowledge creating what they term, apartheid of knowledge in academia. They borrowed the term apartheid, to describe the racial divisions that exist between dominant Eurocentric epistemologies and other epistemological stances, which create a separation of 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' forms of knowledge. (Perez Huber, 2009, p. 640)

This study will showcase the discourses of immigrant students and their parents as people of color and recognizing this knowledge as important for informing educational practices and helping to improve social justice.

Since participants for this study consisted of middle school students ranging from 11-15 years of age, credibility for this study will be maintained through member checks with interview participants and interpretations formed as the interviews take place. The wording of interview questions will be in Spanish and translated in English for narrative purposes. A series of interview questions will be asked to the participants in an open-ended format. Efforts to assess credibility

and truthfulness will be done however, Rossman and Rallis (2003) maintain that in qualitative studies, the data is in the perspective of the participant, not based on the researcher's notions. Credibility will also be maintained through audits reviewing interview transcriptions, field research journal notes, to trace direct quotes. This study will focus more on the impact that subtractive schooling practices may have on the student's socio-emotional perspective and how that transfers to the overall experiences in U.S. schools.

Summary

In closing, the focus of this study is on the impact that schooling practices have on immigrant students. It is my hope that the results from this study will be reviewed and attempts will be made by school staff to reflect on their teaching practices to enable all students to be active participants in their learning. This study does not attempt to solve the achievement gap students may have but it will serve as an awareness of the experiences that immigrants face in US schools.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the findings of this study. In keeping with the research question in mind: What are the *testimonios* of immigrant students in a middle school, and how do their narratives of schooling emerge in their stories? The purpose of this study is to gather and use the stories of immigrant students' educational experiences attending U. S. schools and their parents' discourses on border crossings. Five emergent themes found in this study included, 1) Transnational Immigrants from Reynosa, 2) Preoccupation with English Language, 3) Reynosa Schools vs. U.S. Schools and Inequalities, 4) Participation in Classes and Extra Curriculars, Narrow Evidence of Participation and 5) Life in Reynosa vs. Life in the U.S. Escaping Poverty, Crime and Insecurity *en el otro lado*.

The first finding focused on transnational immigrants from Reynosa. Although it was not my intention, however as it turned out, all participants in this study were from Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico. Four immigrant students and their four parents took part in this study. Participants were reluctant to disclose any specifics about their journey to the U.S. In spite of their silence about their journey to the U.S., the participants did share their reasons for coming to the U.S. Drawing from border literature, referencing Anzaldua (1987) and Taibo (2002) will be used to support the findings on transnational immigrants from Reynosa.

The second finding is on the preoccupation with English language. Although none of the participants were asked about the English language during the interviews, a preoccupation with the English language was a focus that originated in the data. Data in this study demonstrates that school efforts to assist immigrant students with Spanish do not go beyond English as second language (ESL) supports. The literature on LatCrit and Subtractive Schooling will be referenced in this section, drawing from Perez Huber (2010), Valenzuela (1999), along with other supporting authors.

The third finding in this study is on Reynosa Schools vs U.S. Schools and Inequalities. Comparing Reynosa Schools and U.S. Schools, participants described several differences from structural inequalities of school buildings, professionalism with school staff, and access to technology. The literature to support these findings ties with Critical Race Theory, referring to the CRT tenets in particular, the permanence of racism and intersectionality drawing from Delgado and Stefancic (2001, 2017). Also, the literature on LatCrit and the push-pull factor, supporting immigrants' transnational experiences will be referenced in this section, citing from Jupp, Berry, Morales, & Mogush Manson (2018).

The fourth finding from this study is about Participation in Classes and Extra Curriculars, Narrow Evidence of Participation. Students in this part of the interview were asked about their participation of what that looks like in the classroom for them. Although students reported that they were included and participated in school activities, there was very narrow evidence found of this participation. Drawing from literature on Subtractive Schooling referencing Valenzuela (1999) and LatCrit frameworks, from Perez Huber (2010), and other supporting authors.

The fifth and final finding is on Life in Reynosa vs Life in the U.S. Escaping Poverty, Crime and Insecurity *en el otro lado*. Participants shared about their life in Reynosa versus their

life in the U.S. The reasons reported to coming to the U.S. were due to crime in Mexico, poverty and to “live a better life in the U.S”. Literature from the border referencing Anzaldua (1987) and LatCrit, referencing (Perez Huber, 2010) to support data will be used in this finding.

Table 1.
Table of Findings

Findings	Description	Data Sources
1st: Transnational Immigrants from Reynosa	All participants came from Reynosa, Mexico.	<i>Yo vengo de Reynosa</i> [1] p. 7 <i>Mi mama me mando a los Estados Unidos porque allá en México las cosas estaban mal.</i> [1] p. 17.
2nd: Preoccupation with English Language	Although none of the participants were asked about the English language during the interviews, this preoccupation with the English language was focus that originated in the data.	<i>Había muy pocas oportunidades para tomar clases de Inglés y eran de menos calidad, superficial y aquí en la escuela él empezó aprender.</i> [P] p. 30 <i>Bueno, me tratan bien. Aquí, no sé inglés. Yo sé un poco.</i> [1] p. 8.
3rd: Reynosa Schools vs. U.S. Schools and Inequalities	Participants described several differences from structural inequalities of school buildings, professionalism with school staff, and access to technology.	<i>Bueno, la escuela aquí es más. La escuela tiene más cosas que el otro lado porque allá solo tiene un patio que es de recreo y allá no hay deportes y acá sí hay para deportes.</i> [1] p. 7 <i>El problema en México era que, si el maestro no podía asistir a clase ese día, el aula quedaría sin supervisión y solo los estudiantes quedarían solos.</i> [2] p. 13.
4th: Participation in Classes & Extra Curriculars Narrow Evidence	Students in this part of the interview were asked about their participation and some share examples of what that looks like in the classroom for them. The responses from students consisted of “Yes they involve me,” “Yes I participate,” however there was narrow evidence of their participation.	<i>Sí, los profesores me incluyen en el aula y también en las actividades. Los estudiantes también me incluyen a mí. No hablo mucho pero me incluyen en todo.</i> [2] p. 14 <i>No sé cómo entrar en una clase de educación física.</i> [2] p. 11.
5th: Life in Reynosa vs. Life in the U.S. Escaping Poverty, Crime and Insecurity <i>en el otro lado</i>	Reasons that parents reported to coming to the U.S. were due to crime in Mexico, economic hardships and to “live a better life in the U.S”.	<i>Lo que es diferente es la gente, el país. Aquí es menos peligroso.</i> [1] p. 18 <i>México era muy diferente a aquí. La gente, la escuela, el medio ambiente era muy diferente</i> [1] p. 13.

Finding 1

Transnational Immigrants from Reynosa

The first finding from the data, a response that was prevalent in all participants was that they were all from Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico. The Rio Grande Valley is located at the southernmost point of Texas bordering the areas of Mexico such as Matamoros, Rio Bravo and Reynosa. At the meeting point of Mexico and the United States, the four county regions are called the Valley and are one of the fastest growing areas of the United States. The RGV is an area that houses a number of undocumented immigrants. With the recent surge of migrants and changes to re-open borders, further increases of immigrants coming into the U.S will likely increase, however upon reflecting on how this study turned out, it was not my expectation to only embark on participants from Reynosa, Mexico. Indeed, I expected participants to come from Central America or elsewhere, but as it turned out, all four participants and their families were from Reynosa.

Themed Responses of Transnational Immigrants from Reynosa

The following section demonstrates examples that student participants shared on their experiences coming to the U.S.

Interviewer: Where are you from in Mexico? Where are you coming from?

Gerardo: Reynosa [1] p. 1

Gerardo, was a 7th grade student at the time of the interview. He enrolled at South Texas Middle School for one year prior to this study, making him a second-year recent immigrant. Reynosa is a border town south of the Rio Grande Valley, approximately 15 miles. Although not a long distance from Gerardo's home in Reynosa to McAllen, he described his journey as having

“left everything in Mexico”. Gerardo was fluent at speaking English and did request that his interview be conducted in English.

The next participant Beto shared he was also from Reynosa.

Interviewer: Tell me about your journey here to the U.S. and where are you from?

Beto: *Yo vengo de Reynosa. Estaba yendo a la escuela, pero luego empezó el COVID, y ya no hubo escuela. Eso era un problema para mi porque yo necesitaba aprender y mi mamá decidió que yo necesitaba venir al otro lado y aquí estoy.*

I come from Reynosa. I was in school like the COVID started, there was no school and it was a problem for me because I needed to learn and my mother decided that I needed to come to the other side so here I am. [1] p. 7

Interviewer: When did you come over here Beto to the U.S.?

Beto: *Creo que era el día de Navidad.* I think it was on a Christmas day. [1] p. 7

Similar to the previous student, Beto is also a 7th grade student, however he is a first-year recent immigrant also coming from Reynosa, Mexico. Beto only spoke Spanish during his interview. His responses were brief. His response for coming to the U.S. was geared toward COVID and needing to continue his education as a result of schools closing in Mexico.

The next participant also shared she was from Reynosa and was a recent immigrant to the U.S. Leticia was an 8th grade student who had attended all her previous school years in Mexico since Kinder.

Interviewer: Tell me about your journey to the U.S.? Where are you coming from?

Leticia: Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico. [1] p. 12

Interviewer: How long did you study in Reynosa?

Leticia: *Desde el Kinder. No estoy tan segura de cuantos años sean esos, pero ahora estoy en ocho.* Since Kinder, not sure how many years that is and right now I am in 8th grade. [1]

p. 12

Interviewer: Is this your first year attending school in the U.S.?

Leticia: Yes [1] p. 12

Leticia, like the previous participant, was a first-year recent immigrant. Leticia was not previously taking English classes in Mexico, and had many insecurities as a result of not speaking English.

Carmen was the fourth participant and she was a fourth-year recent immigrant to the U.S. Carmen lived in another town as a child and then moved to Reynosa.

Interviewer: Tell me about your journey here to the U.S.? Where are you coming from?

Carmen: *Yo vengo de Mexico, de Reynosa. Mi mama me mando a los Estados Unidos porque allá en México las cosas estaban mal. Mi mamá decidió que nos vinieramos a vivir con mi tia y a estudiar acá con mi tia.*

I come from Mexico, from Reynosa. My mom sent me to the U.S. because over in Mexico it was very bad. My mom decided that I would come to live here with my aunt and to study here with my aunt. [1] p.17

Interviewer: Tell me again, when did you come here to the U.S.?

Carmen: In fifth grade. [1] p. 17

Interviewer: And right now, you are in eighth grade?

Carmen: Yes, in eighth grade. [1] p. 17

Interviewer: Okay. So, you lived in Reynosa, Mexico?

Carmen: Yes, Mexico, Reynosa. [1] p. 17

Interviewer: And you have lived there all of your life?

Carmen: *No. Primero, cuando yo era una niña, yo viví en Los Muros, después me vine a Reynosa, done vivi con mi abuela.* Right now, my grandmother died, but like three years ago we went to live in an apartment of my grandmother's apartment and that's where we are living right now. [1] p. 17

Interviewer: And "Los Muros," where is that at?

Carmen: It is from Mexico too. [1] p. 17

Unlike the other participants, Carmen was able to attend Elementary school in 5th grade in the U.S. She moved to Reynosa later, still as a child before coming to the U.S. four years ago.

The next participant was Gerardo's mother. Also, coming from Reynosa, Mexico. Having always been a resident in Mexico she met a man who lived in the U.S and dated for three years before deciding to marry. Her decision to bring her son to the U.S. geared towards her marriage and moving to the U.S. Her spouse lived in the U.S. and therefore she relocated to McAllen, Texas.

Interviewer: Tell me about your journey to the U.S.? Where are you coming from? [P] p. 30

Gerardo's Mom: *Nosotros venimos de Reynosa. Gerardo estudiaba en un colegio de Reynosa. Estuve en una relación con mi ahora esposo durante aproximadamente tres años y él me pidió que me casara con él y así nos vinimos a vivir a McAllen y bueno, Gerardo se vino aquí. No es tan inseguro como antes. Antes mi esposo era quien ayudaba a resolver sus dudas si tenía dudas sobre la tarea. Ahora no tiene tantas dudas. Ha aprendido mucho en el año y medio que lleva en la escuela con nosotros.*

We come from Reynosa. Gerardo was studying in a school from Reynosa. I was in a relationship with my now husband for approximately three years and he asked me to marry him and so we came to live in McAllen and well Gerardo came here. He is not as insecure as before. Before my husband was the one who would help resolve his doubts if he had questions over homework. Now he doesn't have as many doubts. He has learned a lot in the year and a half he's been at the school with us. [P] p. 30

Gerardo like the rest of the participants had doubts and insecurities at first but then adapted to life in the U.S. The parent emphasizes how much he has learned in the time spent at South Texas Middle School.

The next participant was Beto's mother. Unlike the other participants, this parent had previously lived in the U.S. and would go back and forth to Mexico where her family lived.

Interviewer: Tell me about your journey coming to the U.S.? Where are you from? [P] p.34

Beto's Mom: *Yo soy de Reynosa.* [P] p. 34

Interviewer: Have you lived there all of your life?

Beto's Mom: Yes

Interviewer: More or less when did you come here to the U.S.?

Beto's Mom: In December.

Interviewer: Had you ever been here before?

Beto's Mom: *Si, siempre he estado aquí.* [P] p. 34

Although Beto's mother had been living in the U.S. she chose to leave her family in Mexico and until December of 2019, she was able to bring Beto to the U.S. The parent did not

disclose her reasons for having always been living in the U.S. I can speculate it was for work. She did have a place to live in the U.S. before bringing her son.

The next parent participant was new to the U.S. She, like the others, was from Reynosa, Tamaulipas and came to the U.S. with her husband and daughter.

Interviewer: Tell me about your journey here to the U.S. Where are you coming from?

[P] p. 37

Leticia's Mom: *Reynosa, Tamaulipas. Mi familia y yo nos venimos aquí a McAllen, y esta era la escuela que le pertenece a Letty.* The truth is that we are very happy with the different life that is lived on this side. *Es más fácil manejar las cosas aquí. Aya tenías que estar suelte y suelte dinero para la escuela. Y el sueldo de uno no alcanzaba.* The children are very happy in the school. It is very different as to how they receive their education from over there, the installations, the teachers and well, thank God we are very comfortable and very happy here. *Se vive una vida mejor aquí.* Life is lived better here.

[P] p. 37

The parent reinforced how happy she was with the life that they were living in the U.S. and how happy her children were to come here to the U.S. She mentioned that it was so much easier to manage things here in the U.S.

Analyzing the Transnational Immigrants from Reynosa

The participants in this study all came from Reynosa. The majority are undocumented and some are of mixed status families. I began the Life History interviews asking the participants, "Tell me about your journey here to the U.S.?" Most fell silent. Perhaps they felt threatened that this interview was more of an interrogation about their immigration status rather than a life history interview, or they feared I would take their children out of school because they were

undocumented. Nonetheless they did not share any details about their journey, only their reasons for coming here. I moved the interview along asking “Where are you coming from?” In the hopes that they would start to disclose more detail about their journey to the U.S. Students and parents reported that they all came from Reynosa, Mexico prior to coming to the U.S. In Anzaldua (1987), she describes the U.S. Mexican border as, *una herida abierta*. “Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants” (p. 3). I feel that participants felt they were prohibited from being here in the U.S. They did not feel that sense of freedom to disclose about their journey because they felt like *prohibited inhabitants*. One participant expresses this,

Gerardo: Like my journey was like, I had to leave everything in Mexico, all my friends and family. At first, I was like I was not feeling very good about the idea, but then I started to like it, and it got better. [1] p. 1

Gerardo’s parent also expresses a similar comment in her interview when asked about her reasons for coming to the U.S.

Gerardo’s Mom: He did struggle at first, but then it got a lot easier. He is not as insecure as before. [P] p. 30

As described in Taibo (2002), “illegals were the essential source of the drug traffic that was degrading the North American youth. Stopping them by any means was an ethical imperative, a national duty, the recovery of the tradition of the armed citizen defending his rights” (p. 74) Perhaps the participants thought that it was my duty to somehow prohibit them from receiving an education here? I can only speculate this from their silence. Furthermore, the border region has its stigmas as described in Anzaldua (1987), where she says “*Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, they perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-

breed; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the “normal” (p.3). Above all other speculated reasons for participants not sharing about their journey to the U.S. I suspect that participants crossed here illegally or that they are vulnerable to family members’ deportation because of living in mixed status families.

Participants were more at ease with their responses only on where they came from. Perhaps because they knew that I had knowledge of their children’s home country from school records, they were honest about where they were from prior to coming to the U.S. Even when I asked informally via follow up phone calls to parents or face to face encounters with students at school, they were either silent or said “*no se, nomas nos venimos para este lado*” they just came here and live now in the U.S. This response ties in with Anzaldua (1987) where she talks about *la migra*. *No corran*, don’t run. They’ll think you’re *del otro lao*” (p. 4) I feel that immigrants come with this sense of fear of being taken back to Mexico. That it is best to stay quiet. Immigrants come to the U.S. oftentimes *sin papeles* and they fear *la migra* will deport them.

As student Beto describes,

Beto: *Yo vengo de Reynosa. Estaba yendo a la escuela, pero luego empezó el COVID, y ya no hubo escuela. Eso era un problema para mi porque yo necesitaba aprender y mi mamá decidió que yo necesitaba venir al otro lado y aquí estoy.*

Another reason shared for coming to the U.S., for a “better life.” A parent disclosed,

Letty’s Mom: *Es más fácil manejar las cosas aquí.* The children are very happy in the school.

It is very different as to how they receive their education from over there, the installations, the teachers and well, thank God we are very comfortable and very happy here. *Se vive una vida mejor aquí.* Life is lived better here. [P] p. 37

Students left their lives in Reynosa, to start a new one in the Rio Grande Valley. Family and friends stayed behind. As mentioned by student participant Gerardo,

Gerardo: Like my journey was like, I had to leave everything in Mexico, all my friends and family. [1] p. 1

In Taibo (2002), he talks about being a foreigner. “He didn’t know the landscape, he didn’t feel at home, faced with this touched-up Mexican border town” (p. 30). “How absurd, to become more or less a foreigner by walking a few yards” (p. 29). I imagine my participants felt the same way. Feeling like foreigners to a land that was just arm’s length from where they came. Another border town just in *el otro lao*. In spite of their silence about their journey to the U.S., the participants were willing to risk their lives to cross to the U.S.

Reflections of Finding 1

As an educator who works with students who are recent immigrants to the U.S., most keep their reasons for coming to the U.S. private. Parents usually will share that they are coming to live with a relative for various reasons like illness, housing arrangements, work, etc. When having casual conversations with the students at school, most either are silent or will say they don’t know why they came, some even resort to shrugging their shoulders referring to “I don’t know”. When talking to parents, they are hesitant about responding to questions about why they are coming here or where they reside. As stated in the analysis section, perhaps immigrant families have a notion that U.S. schools are checking on their immigration status and somehow will lead to them having to return to Mexico. Whatever the case may be families are reluctant to share where they are coming from. In having conversations with other educators and families of U.S. born students, they do associate immigrant students with taking advantage of U.S. benefits by coming to the U.S. Benefits such as food stamps, school access and supplies, medical benefits, etc. They feel

they are using up tax payer money on providing these resources for immigrants. Recent immigrants coming to the U.S. is not seen as a welcoming ordeal. I can see why immigrant students and parents choose to stay silent or be limited with the information they share. Immigrant students in the schools are no exception to this, native born students also are observed to make side remarks, such as “The Spanish Kid”, “El Mojado”. Recent immigrants have felt they have to be silent often to avoid confrontation, or problems. Not fitting in with U.S. born youth is a possible reason for their silence. They feel unwanted or not belonging with the rest. There is strong correlation with the silence of these students and not speaking English. This brings up the next finding about participant preoccupation with the English language.

Finding 2

Preoccupation with English Language

The second finding from the data, was on the topic of English as the language of instruction and how this was a preoccupation for both student and parent participants. Data in this study demonstrates that despite school efforts to assist students with Spanish, they do not go beyond translations or English as a Second Language (ESL) “supports.” The overreaching message that ESL programs convey is that Spanish is a second-rate language and the emphasis is to learn English. There is no evidence of Spanish as an academic language at South Texas Middle School. Although none of the participants were asked about the English language during the interviews, this preoccupation with the English language was a focus that originated in the data. All participants preferred to speak Spanish during the interviews, with the exception of one student, who chose to have the interviews conducted in English and responded speaking in English for the most part, despite “non-standard” syntax. Students and parents are recent immigrants to the U.S., coming from Reynosa, Mexico and Spanish is their dominant language

for all of the participants. Parents looked at having their children learn the English language as being able to read, write, speak and understand the language was a sense of accomplishment. Students' experiences with learning the English language was more of an expectation and a sense of belonging with peers. The findings also support that parents having their children learn to acquire the English language was a prioritizing reason for wanting to bring them to the U.S.

Themed Responses on Preoccupation with the English Language

This section describes participant experiences from their schooling in Mexico and U.S. schools with a focus on the English language.

Interviewer: Was there something or a subject you were really good at in Mexico? [2] p.4

Gerardo: Yes. I was very good at English.

Interviewer: Did you take English classes in Mexico? [2] p. 4

Gerardo: Yea.

Interviewer: Tell me about your schooling here in the U.S.? How is that different than in Reynosa? [2] p. 4

Gerardo: Here it's a little bit difficult because it's like in English and there are some words I don't know and I have to search it up.

Interviewer: Do you speak English or Spanish in the classroom? [2] p. 5

Gerardo: It's mostly English. It's rare for me to speak Spanish.

This participant was very self-driven with speaking English-only throughout the interviews. He was the only participant who was brave to take on the English and preferred that all communication with him be done in English. This is contrary to the rest of the parent and student participants who immediately chose to be spoken to in Spanish. This preoccupation with

English, Gerardo emphasizes that although he does encounter difficulties, he mostly speaks English, and is already coming with an English background from his prior schooling in Mexico.

The next participant, Beto, is a first-year recent immigrant. Unlike the previous student, Beto has no English-speaking background. He does demonstrate a sense of preoccupation with not knowing enough English and has many insecurities about being accepted by peers in this U.S. school.

Interviewer: Overall what are your feelings of being here at school at South Texas Middle school in the U.S.? [1] p. 8

Beto: *Bueno, me tratan bien. Aquí, no sé inglés. Yo sé un poco. Me ayudan a aprender y todo eso y bueno, antes me sentía avergonzado porque no sabía inglés, pero luego, cuando me empezaron a hablar en español bien y bien, empecé a hacer amigos.*

Well they treat me well. Here, I don't know English. I know a little. They help me to learn and all that and well I used to feel embarrassed because I didn't know English but then when they started to speak to me in Spanish right and well I started to make friends.

Interviewer: So, the teachers are helping you here, so that you can participate? Do you feel they speak to you in Spanish only so that you can understand?

Beto: *Bueno, sí.*

Well yes. [1] p. 8

In this example, evidence from this student's interview demonstrates a preoccupation with English and this resulted with Beto having feelings of shame for not knowing English. Although he still doesn't know English, because others at the school were able to speak to him in Spanish, he was able to build social relationships with peers and was able to participate in class because his

teachers also spoke to him in Spanish. These ESL supports provided through translations to this student serve to help him build relationships with peers and form an affiliation in the classroom. However, there is no mention of how Spanish instruction was embedded with these ESL supports to promote the English instruction or any mention of academic learning in Spanish. This participation is evidenced in this next part of the interview when asked to go more in detail with his learning in the U.S. as compared to his learning in Mexico. The student makes evidence of the use of computers alongside the English language as a significant difference between instruction in the U.S and Mexico.

Interviewer: Tell me a little more about your classroom. What did you learn over there and how does that compare what you learn here in the classroom? [1] p. 9.

Beto: *Bueno, en el aula bien tiene, uh mm... tiene ...*

Well, in the classroom well it has, uh mm... it has ...

Interviewer: What differences do you notice? You told me about the computers. That over there, there was no computer?

Beto: *Ninguno.*

None

Interviewer: How did you learn over there? What materials did you use?

Beto: *Utilizamos Matemáticas, Ciencias, Historia. Usamos cuadernos pero no computadoras para hacer el trabajo.*

We used Mathematics, Science, History. We used notebooks but no computers to do the work.

Interviewer: So, it was books; you had to take notes using paper and pencil, that type of learning?

Beto: *Si.*

Yes.

Interviewer: And here at South Texas Middle School since you just entered, what is the difference from how you are learning? Do you use paper and pencil a lot?

Beto: *No mucho. Uso la computadora para hacer el trabajo y eso.*

Not a lot. I use the computer to do the work and that.

Interviewer: Okay. How did you learn to use the computer if in Reynosa you didn't use it? Are they showing you how to use it, or are you learning to use it on your own? How are you managing the computer if the instruction is in English?

Beto: *Bueno, mi primo me estaba ayudando.*

Well my cousin was helping me.

Interviewer: Does he attend school here?

Beto: *Si, antes.*

Yes, before.

Interviewer: Do you think that here at South Texas Middle School, they are assisting you with the computer use? If you have homework they show you how to do the work, or do you feel they leave you alone to do the work?

Beto: *Si, me ayudan.*

Yes, they help me. [1] p. 9

Interviewer: The teachers help you, or the students, or who helps you? [1] p. 10

Beto: *Los profesores.*

The teachers. [1] p. 10

Although Beto is not clear about how teachers are assisting him with computer use or any type of help in the classroom to include English, he only mentions that the teachers help him. This ill-definition of teachers assisting him, may be due to lack of examples he can think of. This may also be attributed to a preoccupation to the lack of knowledge with English and computers and his participation in the classroom as a result. ESL supports were not evident with Beto's computer use in this example as he could not share any specific examples of how teachers or peers assisted him with learning to use the computer.

The next participant, also a first-year recent immigrant with little English background from her prior school in Reynosa shares she does have some understanding of her teacher's English explanations.

Interviewer: Tell me about your schooling here in the U.S.

Leticia: *Los profesores explican muy bien las cosas a los alumnos. Sí, hay ocasiones en las que no me explican en español, pero está bien porque mi nivel de comprensión del inglés no es tan bajo que no pueda entender sus explicaciones.*

The teachers explain things very well to the students. Yes, there are times when they don't explain to me in Spanish, but it's okay because my level of understanding English is not that low that I cannot understand their explanations. [2] p. 14

Interviewer: When the teachers are providing explanations to you, are they speaking in English or Spanish to you?

Leticia: *En inglés. Si tengo alguna duda o confusión me la traducen.*

In English. If I have a doubt or confusion they translate it to me. [2] p. 15

Interviewer: Since you don't ask for help often as you said before, how would your teachers know if you understood what was explained?

Leticia: *La mayoría de las veces los profesores me preguntan si entiendo. Como los profesores saben que no domino exactamente el idioma inglés, suelen preguntar siempre si entendí todo y ahí es donde aclaro cualquier duda que pueda tener.*

The majority of times the teachers ask if I understand. Since teachers know that I have not exactly mastered the English language, they usually always ask if I understood everything and that is where I clarify any doubt I may have. [2] p. 15

This participant also shares a sense of preoccupation with her level of understanding English and her ability to follow along in the classroom. She emphasizes on her level of understanding English *no es tan bajo que no pueda entender sus explicaciones*. Is not so low that I cannot understand their explanations. The ESL supports provided to Leticia here do not go beyond the teacher checking for understanding and translations from English to Spanish. There was no mention of instruction taught in Spanish where there were areas of uncertainty for the student to make a connection with the content. English remained as the language of instruction throughout, only including ESL supports.

Carmen is a fourth-year recent immigrant and like the aforementioned participants, she was limited with her understanding and English speaking.

Interviewer: Okay, so tell me a little about your experience here?

Carmen: Of this school?

Interviewer: Yes.

Carmen: *Bueno, en sexto grado no me fue muy bien con mis calificaciones. En séptimo grado entendí mejor las cosas más o menos. En este momento, en octavo grado entiendo mejor el inglés, pero no mucho. Sé un poco de inglés. Puedo leerlo un poco, pero puedo*

hablarlo, pero no soy tan bueno pronunciándolo. Y va bien con mis clases. Tengo buenas notas, pero el inglés es el que tengo más dificultades por ahora y la historia también.

Well, in sixth grade it did not go very well for me with my grades. In seventh grade I more or less understood things better. Right now, in eighth grade I understand English better right, but not a lot. I know a little bit of English. I can read it a little, but I can speak it, but I am not that good at pronouncing it. And it goes well with my classes. I have good grades, but English is the one I have difficulties for now and History also. [2] pp. 19-20

Interviewer: Why do you feel you have more difficulties there?

Carmen: Bueno, no es por el trabajo, porque dan tareas sencillas y fáciles, pero en inglés me confundo mucho porque no sé cómo decirlo.

Well, it's not because of the work, because they give simple, easy assignments, but in English I get confused a lot because I don't know how to say it.

Like the other participants, Carmen also has a preoccupation with English as she struggles with her English speaking and comprehension abilities. Although she considers herself as having made progress with her English, overall it remains a barrier that affects her learning. This is another example of linguistic subtraction in terms of content. This student mentioned her struggles with English and History classes due to her limited English ability. Here there was no evidence of teachers implementing either ESL supports or teaching the student Spanish academics to assist the student Carmen with comprehension of content.

Parent responses also have a similar preoccupation about their children's English skills with regards to having insecurities about coming to the U.S. and attending school here, however they focus more on their children overcoming those language barriers and how this will bring forth a positive outcome in the long run.

Gerardo 's Mom: *Al principio sí tuvo dificultades con el inglés porque en México apenas les daban clases de inglés. Son muy pocas oportunidades para las clases de inglés y muy superficiales, entonces aquí en la escuela poco a poco empezó a aprender. Luchó al principio, pero luego se volvió mucho más fácil. No es tan inseguro como antes. Antes, mi esposo era el que ayudaba a resolver sus dudas si tenía preguntas sobre la tarea. Ahora no tiene tantas dudas. Ha aprendido mucho en el año y medio que ha estado en la escuela con nosotros.*

In the beginning he did have difficulties with English because in Mexico they hardly gave them any English classes. They are very few opportunities for English classes and very superficial, so then here at school slowly he began to learn. He did struggle at first, but then it got a lot easier. He is not as insecure as before. Before my husband was the one who would help resolve his doubts if he had questions over homework. Now he doesn't have as many doubts. He has learned a lot in the year and a half he's been at the school with us. [P] p. 30

The parent expresses that despite student insecurities, the student has made progress with learning the English language attending school in the U.S at South Texas Middle School.

The next parent shares a similar gratitude towards the school for the progress her son Beto has made with the English language.

Interviewer: And your son, I don't know how different it is but, you said that you brought him here to give him a better life correct? How do you think things are? Is it better having come to the U.S.?

Beto's Mom: *Bueno, sí, he notado muchos cambios. Habla inglés, sabe escribir, le gusta.*

Well yes, I've noticed a lot of changes. He speaks English, he knows how to write, he likes it. [P] p. 34

Interviewer: How satisfied are you with the education Beto is receiving here in the U.S.?
You said you saw he was making progress with his English. How satisfied are you with his education?

Beto's Mom: *Bueno. Ha demostrado mucho progreso desde que ingresó en enero o febrero. Creo que he oído que habla inglés, lo entiende bien por lo que puedo ver cuando está en la computadora, con sus deberes, cuando habla inglés. Aunque no lo entiendo, he visto muchos cambios.*

Good. He's demonstrated a lot of progress since he entered in January or February. I think I've heard that he speaks English, he understands it well from what I can see when he's on the computer, with his homework, when he speaks English. Even though I don't understand it, I've seen a lot of changes. [P] p. 35

This parent, although not able to speak English, shows her preoccupation with the English language as she observes her son as having made progress with English speaking and comprehension and writing skills as her son completes homework and assignments on his computer. She expresses her satisfaction with his overall progress and shares her son's liking for his learning of English. The parent is making a connection between future skills the student is acquiring through his computer use and English in preparation for workforce skills.

The next participant is Carmen's aunt. Her driving force for bringing Carmen to the U.S. was so that she could learn English.

Interviewer: Why did you decide to bring Carmen over here to the U.S.?

Carmen 's Aunt: *Para estudiar. Cuando crezca para poder defenderse con el lenguaje y hacer algo de sí misma. Y en Reynosa, sabes que las cosas van muy mal. Los llevaban a la escuela caminando. Entonces, hablé con mis hermanos y la mamá de Carmen y les dije que podía traer a Carmen aquí para estudiar. Tanto Carmen como su hermano están muy felices. Han salido bien. Están aprendiendo inglés rápidamente.*

To study. When she grows up so that she can defend herself with the language and make something of herself. And in Reynosa, you know how things are very bad. They would take them to school walking. So, I spoke to my brothers and Carmen's mother and told them that I could bring Carmen over here to study. And both Carmen and her brother are so happy. They have come out well. They are learning English fast. [P] p. 40

Carmen 's Aunt: *Pero lo hago para ofrecerles una vida mejor aquí en los EE. UU. Esa fue la razón por la que eligieron venir aquí. Verían que mi hija hablaba inglés y dirían que querían hablar inglés como ella. Y es por eso que ahora Carmen dice que entiende mejor el inglés y me alegra que lo estén haciendo bien aquí.*

But, I do it to offer them a better life here in the U.S. That was the reason they chose to come here. They would see that my daughter spoke English and they would say they wanted to speak English like she did. And that's why now Carmen says she is understanding English better and it makes me happy they are doing well here. [P] p. 40-41

Carmen's aunt expresses her preoccupation in her own children's English-speaking abilities and how this motivated Carmen to want to do the same. She offered to bring Carmen to the U.S. for a better life but with the motivation to learn to speak English just as her children do.

Analysis of Data About the Preoccupation with English Language

Data in this study demonstrates that although school efforts were done to assist students with Spanish, they do not go beyond translations or English as a Second Language (ESL) supports. “No Spanish” rules were a ubiquitous feature of U.S. Mexican schooling through the early 1970s (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 172). Although they have been abolished, Mexican youth continue to be subjected on a daily basis to subtle, negative messages that undermine the worth of their unique culture and history (Valenzuela, 1999). Today, the message that ESL programs continue to convey is that Spanish is a second-rate language and the emphasis is to learn English. According to recent scholarship on nativism and drawing from a LatCrit perspective, nativism acknowledges how contemporary nativism has targeted specific groups according to racialized perceptions of who fits into the “American” national identity (Perez-Huber, 2010). Furthermore, drawing from a similar logic is defining racism, contemporary nativism is a perceived superiority of the native, which justifies perceived native dominance. Thus, nativism in this study is defined as “the practice of assigning values to real or imagined differences, in order to justify the superiority of the native, and to defend the native’s right to dominance, at the expense of the non-native” (Perez Huber, 2010, p. 80.) This next example supports that although teachers provide ESL supports with translations in Spanish for Beto, these translations do not offer any academic learning in Spanish for the student. The expectation remains that he understands the English content through the ESL supports. This evidence supports the justification of English through Spanish translations.

Interviewer: Overall what are your feelings of being here at school at South Texas Middle school in the U.S.? [1] p. 8

Beto: *Bueno, me tratan bien. Aquí, no sé inglés. Yo sé un poco. Me ayudan a aprender y todo eso y bueno, antes me sentía avergonzado porque no sabía inglés, pero luego, cuando me empezaron a hablar en español bien y bien, empecé a hacer amigos.*

Well they treat me well. Here, I don't know English. I know a little. They help me to learn and all that and well I used to feel embarrassed because I didn't know English but then when they started to speak to me in Spanish right and well I started to make friends.

Interviewer: So, the teachers are helping you here, so that you can participate? Do you feel they speak to you in Spanish only so that you can understand?

Beto: *Bueno, sí.* Well yes. [1] p. 8

This evidence is a type of linguistic subtraction. Therefore, not providing any real Spanish learning to help the student build a background for future learning in English. In another study examining the impact of subtractive schooling, including language use in education, on the identity of a group of ethnic minority students in Central Highlands of Vietnam. Findings reveal that the subtractive power of the school language and institutional milieu profoundly influenced their identity construction by creating conditions for the devaluation of their language and cultural identity (Trang & Hamid, 2017, p.1). At South Texas just as in Valenzuela's study at a high school, curriculum is designed to divest youth of their Mexican identities and to impede the prospects for fully vested bilingualism and biculturalism (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 172). Furthermore, Garza, Eufrazio and Jupp (2021), when referring to the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) and resistant traditions mention that the understanding of the RGV, Aztlan as its bioregion is important because of the “*amnesiac pressure of cultural and linguistic subtraction*” place on the region via schools, standardized testing and English language testing (pp. 4-5). In another study that has shown that U.S. students' schooling experiences have been subtractive in nature is in Menken and Kleyn

(2010), in a qualitative study of three New York City high schools, where the focus is on long-term English Language Learners (LTELs) and the importance of offering opportunities for native language development in school. Findings reveal that since their native languages have not been fully developed in school and instead have been replaced largely by English, they typically have limited literacy skills in English or in their native languages (pp. 399-400). Also, Trang and Hamid (2017), mention that subtractive education prevails in Vietnam and consequently, minority students face numerous difficulties compared with their counterparts. In addition, to educational disadvantage, minority students' own languages and sociocultural identities are implicated in the process of subtractive schooling (p. 3). The findings further support research in bilingual education theory, which suggests that subtractive schooling can have negative consequences for students' academic performance.

When referring to the funds of knowledge and viewing households, Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti (2017) mentioned in their study, one example of a dispelled myth is that Mexican immigrants have poor educational backgrounds. Furthermore, instead of finding parents who do not emphasize education, parents wanted more homework, more communication with the schools, and stricter discipline. Families interviewed in this study informed that education was one of the reasons they came to the United States (Gonzalez et al., 2017). Parents, especially, are thinking that their children are going to "get ahead," if their children are able to acquire the English language. In support, Gonzalez and Moll (2002), mention that through investigating the many local funds of knowledge that can be utilized to validate students' identities as knowledgeable individuals who can use such knowledge as a foundation for future learning (p. 623). This future learning ties in with evidence from data findings that support English and computer use are visibly connected and potential future job skills. In this next example the student makes evidence

of the use of computers alongside the English language as a significant difference between instruction in the U.S and Mexico.

Interviewer: Tell me a little more about your classroom. What did you learn over there and how does that compare what you learn here in the classroom? [1] p. 9.

Beto: *Bueno, en el aula bien tiene, uh mm... tiene ...*

Well, in the classroom well it has, uh mm... it has ...

Interviewer: What differences do you notice? You told me about the computers. That over there, there was no computer?

Beto: *Ninguno.*

None.

Similarly, in the next example, Beto's mother also connects English with the computer use that Beto receives attending U.S. schools.

Interviewer: How satisfied are you with the education Beto is receiving here in the U.S.? You said you saw he was making progress with his English. How satisfied are you with his education?

Beto's Mom: *Bueno. Ha demostrado mucho progreso desde que ingresó en enero o febrero. Creo que he oído que habla inglés, lo entiende bien por lo que puedo ver cuando está en la computadora, con sus deberes, cuando habla inglés. Aunque no lo entiendo, he visto muchos cambios.*

Good. He's demonstrated a lot of progress since he entered in January or February. I think I've heard that he speaks English, he understands it well from what I can see when he's on the computer, with his homework, when he speaks English. Even though I don't understand it, I've seen a lot of changes. [P] p. 35

It is evident that learning English and acquiring computer skills are qualities that this parent attributes to her son's success and is seen as an accomplishment. In support, literature from Garza, et al. (2021), in a study focusing on community, states that community development emphasizes that student 'achievement' and 'success' be measured by students' sense of place and meaning rather than decontextualized future earnings or social mobility promoted in subtractive schooling (pp. 3-4). This parent observes the importance of her son attending U.S. schools, as having a direct impact to his accomplishments. The student is forming community ties with South Texas Middle School and this in turn will foster needed skills for future jobs, careers and other opportunities.

Similarly, in this example the parent expresses that English class opportunities were very limited in Mexico and coming here to the U.S. the student has made progress with his learning English. Although English continues to be a preoccupation, the parent here places emphasis on the importance of learning despite struggles with English. The students on the other hand place more emphasis on learning English more as an expectation because their parents want them to learn to speak English and so they have more of an affiliation to the school and peers.

Gerardo 's Mom: Al principio sí tuvo dificultades con el inglés porque en México apenas les daban clases de inglés. Son muy pocas oportunidades para las clases de inglés y muy superficiales, entonces aquí en la escuela poco a poco empezó a aprender. Luchó al principio, pero luego se volvió mucho más fácil.

At first, he did have difficulties with English because in Mexico they hardly gave them English classes. There are very few opportunities for English classes and very superficial, so here at school he gradually began to learn. He struggled at first, but then it became much easier.

Similarly, in this next example, the aunt expresses the reasons for bringing her niece Carmen to the U.S. and foremost was the preoccupation that she learns English. The aunt sees the importance of education and student making something of herself as a result of this education, with an emphasis on learning the English language.

Interviewer: Why did you decide to bring Carmen over here to the U.S.?

Carmen 's Aunt: *Para estudiar. Cuando crezca para poder defenderse con el lenguaje y hacer algo de sí misma. Y en Reynosa, sabes que las cosas van muy mal. Los llevaban a la escuela caminando. Entonces, hablé con mis hermanos y la mamá de Carmen y les dije que podía traer a Carmen aquí para estudiar. Tanto Claudia como su hermano están muy felices. Han salido bien. Están aprendiendo inglés rápidamente.*

Other examples from the data in this study support the literature on subtractive schooling practices that exist. As mentioned in the literature, that as English as a Second Language (ESL) programs are designed to transition youth into an English-only curriculum, they neither reinforce their native language skills nor their cultural identities (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 26). ESL is designed to impart to non-native English-speakers sufficient verbal and written skills to effectuate their transition into an all-English curriculum within a three-year period (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 180). In this example, Beto is taking all English classes with ESL supports. The student shares that his teachers only speak English and translate to him in Spanish so that he is able to understand their explanations.

Interviewer: So, the teachers are helping you here, so that you can participate? Do you feel they speak to you in Spanish only so that you can understand?

Beto: *Pues sí. Porque todo el tiempo hablan inglés.* Well yes, because otherwise they only speak in English [1] p. 8

Furthermore, ESL programs provide an illusion of inclusion, but the institutional message they convey is that Spanish is a second-rate language and that the goals of bilingualism and biculturalism are neither worthwhile nor expedient (Valenzuela, 1999). Students in South Texas Middle School are clear about how Spanish is used in school, more for support when they do not understand in English or as a social language. There is no evidence of Spanish as an academic language at South Texas Middle School. In this example, although teachers do check for student understanding, their efforts do not go beyond simple translations.

Interviewer: When the teachers are providing explanations to you, are they speaking in English or Spanish to you?

Leticia: *En inglés. Si tengo alguna duda o confusión me la traducen.*

In English. If I have a doubt or confusion they translate it to me. [2] p. 15

Interviewer: Since you don't ask for help often as you said before, how would your teachers know if you understood what was explained?

Leticia: *La mayoría de las veces los profesores me preguntan si entiendo. Como los profesores saben que no domino exactamente el idioma inglés, suelen preguntar siempre si entendí todo y ahí es donde aclaro cualquier duda que pueda tener.*

Most of the time teachers ask me if I understand. As the teachers know that I am not exactly fluent in the English language, they always ask if I understood everything and that is where I clarify any doubts you may have. [2] p. 15

In this example Leticia is highly preoccupied with how English is emphasized in the classroom. It is apparent that the emphasis on instruction is English-based. Although the teachers provide translations to her in Spanish this sidelining act only ignores the Spanish language. Ideally parents would like for their children to be bilingual by attending U.S. schools, but this may not be

the reality of the situation if their children only receive ESL supports, rather than Spanish instruction be embedded with their English learning.

The following example is taken from the Texas English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS), also noted on researcher journal, where ELPS as part of the 19th Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Chapter 74, Curriculum Requirements, reinforces that these standards are aligned with and apply to all academic content areas, [RJ] p. 10. It is evident in the ELPS chart that English is the language of instruction. There is no evidence to offer Spanish support while the students are learning English. The push is for students to pronounce, internalize, acquire, and demonstrate comprehension of only the English language. This in a sense is a subtractive schooling practice that is placed on curriculum requirements. This information is coming from the researcher notebook and copied and pasted over. This is the attitude that we see that students take. They feel that their purpose in taking classes at South Texas Middle School is to meet the expectation to acquire the English language. The effect this places on students is that Spanish becomes a second language to English. Spanish is devalued as their first language in U.S. schools and the need to use Spanish is only for social, or recreational purposes not for academics. The Spanish academics in essence is not needed in K-12 schools because the goal is to acquire the English language. The following Table 2, demonstrates the Texas English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS) that teachers who service English learners must follow as part of their curriculum and lesson delivery.

Table 2.
Texas English Language Proficiency Standards

Texas English Language Proficiency Standards

Speaking	3.A	Practice producing sounds of newly acquired vocabulary such as long and short vowels, silent letters, and consonant clusters to pronounce English words in a manner that is increasingly comprehensible
	3.B	Expand and internalize initial English vocabulary by learning and using high-frequency English words necessary for identifying and describing people, places, and objects, by retelling simple stories and basic information represented or supported by pictures, and by learning and using routine language needed for classroom communication
	3.C	Speak using a variety of grammatical structures, sentence lengths, sentence types, and connecting words with increasing accuracy and ease as more English is acquired
	3.D	Speak using grade-level content area vocabulary in context to internalize new English words and build academic language proficiency
	3.E	Share information in cooperative learning interactions
	3.F	Ask and give information ranging from using a very limited bank of high-frequency, high-need, concrete vocabulary, including key words and expressions needed for basic communication in academic and social contexts, to using abstract and content-based vocabulary during extended speaking assignments
	3.G	Express opinions, ideas, and feelings ranging from communicating single words and short phrases to participating in extended discussions on a variety of social and grade-appropriate academic topics
	3.H	Narrate, describe, and explain with increasing specificity and detail as more English is acquired
	3.I	Adapt spoken language appropriately for formal and informal purposes
	3.J	Respond orally to information presented in a wide variety of print, electronic, audio, and visual media to build and reinforce concept and language attainment
Reading	4.A	Learn relationships between sounds and letters of the English language and decode (sound out) words using a combination of skills such as recognizing sound-letter relationships and identifying cognates, affixes, roots, and base words
	4.B	Recognize directionality of English reading such as left to right and top to bottom
	4.C	Develop basic sight vocabulary, derive meaning of environmental print, and comprehend English vocabulary and language structures used routinely in written classroom materials
	4.D	Use prereading supports such as graphic organizers, illustrations, and pretaught topic-related vocabulary and other prereading activities to enhance comprehension of written text
	4.E	Read linguistically accommodated content area material with a decreasing need for linguistic accommodations as more English is learned
	4.F	Use visual and contextual support and support from peers and teachers to read grade-appropriate content area text, enhance and confirm understanding, and develop vocabulary, grasp of language structures, and background knowledge needed to comprehend increasingly challenging language
	4.G	Demonstrate comprehension of increasingly complex English by participating in shared reading, retelling or summarizing material, responding to questions, and taking notes commensurate with content area and grade level needs
	4.H	Read silently with increasing ease and comprehension for longer periods

Reflections of Finding 2

As a former student and product of the Bilingual programs in U.S. schools, I can say that I do find a positive in how having passed through the bilingual program in my elementary school years have helped me have somewhat of a better understanding of what students whose first language is not English experience. Although I grew up speaking both English and Spanish in my household, my mother chose to place me in Bilingual instruction at the start of my Kinder year. I learned to read English at home at the age of four and learned to read both English and Spanish at school. This did bring confusion as I would have difficulties with writing in English because I

was taught how to write phonetically in my Bilingual classes. I remember failing my English spelling tests again and again until my mother sat with me and showed me how to memorize the words I wrote just the way I learned to memorize words to read. I had to remember that when I wrote and read in Spanish it was phonetic and when I read and wrote in English it was through memory of the appearance of the word.

After going back and forth with learning English and translations to Spanish, a teacher in my 3rd grade class finally discovered that I was very strong with my English and there was no need to continue in Bilingual classes, so I was moved to an all English class. I found that I no longer needed to be translating for myself in my head depending on the language of instruction for the day because now it was all in English. I was able to excel with English and only kept speaking the Spanish in order to communicate with my grandmother who only spoke Spanish and my peers at school who spoke Spanish. I no longer needed to write in Spanish so this became a lost academic for me. My Spanish speaking has improved over the years with more practice. I speak Spanish on a daily basis at work, at home and around my family. Tying Funds of Knowledge with my experience, I feel that being bilingual has added value to my current position as a school administrator and educator. This is a skill that is needed in order to communicate with students and their families who are also Spanish speaking. I've learned to "tame my wild tongue", as referenced in Anzaldua (1987) and Garza, Eufracio, and Jupp (2021) and translanguage, depending on who I am speaking with. I am proud to be able to speak fluent Spanish.

As a teacher, English was the only method of instruction I was allowed to teach my students. Even translations had to be kept to a strict minimum and as teachers, we had to implement ESL strategies for our non-English speakers. Linguistic translations were seen as a last resort to use with students as they had to use their problem-solving skills to figure out the

meaning of English words using Bilingual dictionaries, visual representations, context clues, and other ESL strategies. I found that my non-English speakers required more of my time to understand English content and I had to use more visuals, simplified vocabulary, slow the pace of instruction so that the students could keep up. I observed how my non-English speakers were quieter and hardly participated in class with the rest of my English-speaking students. As they year progressed I felt that students did make progress but not enough to prepare them for the following year with enough English to prepare them for on-level content.

Currently as a school Administrator, I observe how things have not changed very much over a decade ago when I was a classroom teacher. Non-English speakers still shy away from participating in their classrooms, they are usually the ones at the back of the line when entering places with other English speakers such as the cafeteria, library, gym, etc. The instruction provided in the classroom is in all English and whatever ESL supports provided are done after the initial English teach and the teacher either briefly approaches the non-English speaking student to assist after the rest have begun their assignments, or there is an ESL teacher or paraprofessional, if available, assisting the student as the General Education teacher explains in English to the rest of the students. I observe how non-English speakers whisper to me if they need permission to use the restroom or ask for assistance. These students tend not to be part of extra-curricular events unless it is something they are highly familiar with such as Spanish poetry, Soccer or Spanish as a Foreign Elective class. Otherwise students do not tend to participate with school activities unless they are invited or required to participate. These students are like “ghost students”, silently making their way through the halls, curriculum, and endless battery of English exams. All testing for state accountability to include the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) and the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) are all

done in English. Therefore, despite efforts of seven elementary, one middle school and one high school with McAllen ISD having dual language programs available for non-English speakers, the outcome remains that students will be assessed in English and the focus of instruction remains to be English. This takes us to the next finding on inequalities, comparing Reynosa schools and U.S. schools.

Finding 3

Reynosa Schools vs U.S. Schools and Inequalities

The third finding from the data comparing Reynosa schools to U.S. schools, demonstrated evidence that participants found more benefits in attending U.S. schools or *el otro lado* as is referenced in this finding. Participants described several differences from structural inequalities of school buildings, professionalism with school staff, and access to technology. The data shows that student participants found there was more structure and access to technology and other resources in U.S. schools. Parents found that their children also had more access to technology and more opportunities in U.S. schools. Although there were some benefits mentioned by students to taking classes in Mexico, such as having access to the outdoors in open campus settings for recess, they preferred the structure and organization of U.S. schools, nonetheless racialized inequalities cross borders to greater inequalities. The literature to support these findings ties with Critical Race Theory, referring to the CRT tenets in particular, the permanence of racism and intersectionality, referencing (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This tenet emphasizes the permanence of racism referring to racism's ever-present manifestations in the social world in everything from personal interactions to globalizing economic and political structures (Jupp, Regina Berry, Morales, & Mogush Mason, 2018, Ladson Billings & Tate, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Intersectionality and antiessentialism or ever-evolving history, refers to everyone having

potentially conflicting, overlapping identities, loyalties and allegiances (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Also, the literature on LatCrit, to support immigrants' transnational experiences, to provide a framework responding to the long historical presence and enduring invisibility of Latinas/os in the lands of the United States, to investigate in coalitional ways the comparative, transnational patterns of subordination reflected in local as well as global contexts (Valdes, 2005). From my observations racial inequalities are greater with increasing phenotype across the border is a contribution to CRT, which often deals insularly with just U.S. minorities, not racialized whole countries or continents. Participants in this study share their stories referencing the inequalities that exist in Reynosa schools compared to U.S. schools, and also how these inequalities are carried over across the border. These transnational experiences are only sometimes really captured in LatCrit, which mainly focuses on Chicana experiences in the U.S.

Themed Responses of Reynosa Schools vs. U.S. Schools and Inequalities

This section will describe examples participants spoke about over Reynosa and U.S. school inequalities.

The first participant Gerardo, who is a second-year recent immigrant coming from Reynosa, Mexico, shares his experiences attending a school in Reynosa. Gerardo preferred to have his interview conducted in English and his responses were also in English.

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about what you remember your school was like in Reynosa?

Gerardo: It was kind of different, because you have to be in just one classroom and you have to do all your classes there and then you would have an hour or so to have lunch.

There was also a backyard and you could play and run and do a lot of stuff during lunch.

[2] p. 4

Interviewer: Was it a big school, a small school, or was it like South Texas Middle School?

Gerardo: Not as big as South Texas Middle School, but it was big. [2] p. 4

Interviewer: Do you remember what grades went to that school?

Gerardo: It went from first grade all the way to sixth grade. [2] p. 4

Interviewer: Now that you told me a little bit about your school in Mexico, what about how you would learn? How would they teach you over there? What was different from how you are getting taught here?

Gerardo: Over there we don't use computers and stuff. We used to have everything on paper and books. [2] p. 4

Interviewer: Tell me about your schooling here in the U.S.? How is that different than in Reynosa?

Gerardo: Here everything has to be online and you have to switch classrooms and move from one classroom to another. [2] p. 4

Interviewer: What about the classroom you said you were in all day, did they have windows, air conditioning? What was the structure of the school like?

Gerardo: It was almost the same as here. It was just that the classrooms were not in a building. The classrooms were little rooms stuck together but not in a building. When you got out of the classroom there is the outside. There was no air conditioning only the outside air. [2] p. 5

Gerardo describes the inequalities from his school in Reynosa compared to South Texas Middle School. Inequalities ranged from his class schedule, single classroom setting all day, the school building was an open campus style, and no air-conditioning. Another difference mentioned

was that students did not have access to computers and technology resources in Reynosa schools. From researcher journal notes, these resources were also a motivating reason parents described for bringing their children to attend U.S. schools.

The next participant Beto, shares similar descriptions of his school in Reynosa as the previous student, compared to South Texas Middle School. Beto does prefer to speak Spanish throughout his interview.

Interviewer: Okay. Tell me some similarities that you notice from school here at South Texas Middle School? How does that compare to your school in Mexico? [1] p. 7

Beto: *Bueno, la escuela aquí es más. La escuela tiene más cosas que el otro lado porque allá solo tiene un patio que es de recreo y allá no hay deportes y acá sí hay para deportes. Y aquí hay un gimnasio para levantamiento de pesas y allá no lo tiene. Es muy diferente allá que aquí.*

Well, the school here is more. The school has more things than over here because over there on the other side it has only a patio that is for recess and over there, there is no sports and here yes it has for sports. And here there is a gym for weight lifting and over there it does not have. It is very different over there than here. [1] p. 7

Interviewer: Okay and what about your classes that you had over there, how do you compare them to the classes you have here at South Texas Middle School?

Beto: *Aquí, nos dieron computadoras para que podamos estar en línea. En el otro lado estamos en casa haciendo la tarea y mi mamá tiene que ir a entregarla a la escuela para que pueda entregar la tarea que hice yo.*

Here, they gave us computers so that we can be online. On the other side we are just at home doing homework and my mom has to be going to turn it in at the school so that she can turn in the homework I did. [1] p. 7

Interviewer: Any other similarities that you know of? [1] p. 8

Beto: *Pues del almuerzo, allá hay que pagar como 20, 5, 10, pesos y acá no. Aquí te dan la comida que se sirve bien.*

Well of the lunch, over there you have to pay like 20, 5, 10, *pesos* or cents and here no. Here they give you the food that is served right. [1] p. 8

Interviewer: So over in Reynosa you have to pay for your meals?

Beto: *Sí, o si no, tengo que almorzar.*

Yes, or if not, I have to take lunch. [1] p. 8

In these examples, Beto compares his school in Reynosa to his current school at South Texas. The examples mentioned by Beto are forms of structural inequalities present comparing Reynosa schools to U.S. schools. Beto has this idea that U.S. schools are “*aquí es más*” or “*La escuela tiene más cosas que el otro lado.*” “here is more” or “The school has more things than over there.” South Texas Middle School is located in south McAllen, where predominately students who are classified as At Risk, English Learners, including recent immigrants, attend middle school compared to other middle schools in McAllen. Although for Beto South Texas Middle School may appear to have “more” than his school in Mexico, the reality is that South Texas Middle school lacks in resources compared to other McAllen schools. Another inequality mentioned when comparing Beto’s school in Reynosa to South Texas, was free meal access to students, in comparison to having to pay for school lunches in Mexico. In the U.S. education is

free and this includes meal access versus in Mexico where tuition fees for K-12 grades are applied.

In the next example, Beto compares his classroom instruction in Reynosa to the instruction offered in U.S. schools.

Interviewer: Tell me a little more about your classroom. What did you learn over there and how does that compare what you learn here in the classroom?

Interviewer: What differences do you notice? You told me about the computers. That over there, there was no computer?

Beto: *Ninguna*. None. [2] p. 9

Interviewer: How did you learn over there? What materials did you use?

Beto: *Usamos Matemáticas, Ciencias, Historia. Usamos cuadernos, pero no computadoras para hacer el trabajo.*

We used Mathematics, Science, History. We used notebooks but no computers to do the work. [2] p. 9

Interviewer: And here at South Texas Middle School since you just entered, what is the difference from how you are learning? Do you use paper and pencil a lot?

Beto: *No mucho. Uso la computadora para hacer el trabajo y eso.*

Not a lot. I use the computer to do the work and that. [2] p. 9

In this example, Beto emphasizes on the use of his computer to access instruction in U.S. as compared to using books, paper and pencil as in Mexico as another inequality. Beto assumes this as a norm and finds having access to a computer for his classes in the U.S. as a difference.

The next participant Leticia, also compares her school in Reynosa, Mexico to her school in the U.S. Leticia points out inequalities with staff professionalism, however emphasizes more differences with the structures and organization between the two schools.

Interviewer: Tell me about your classes in Mexico. Were your classes similar or different than the ones you are taking here?

Leticia: *Sí, eran similares. El problema en México era que, si el maestro no podía asistir a clase ese día, el aula quedaría sin supervisión y solo los estudiantes quedarían solos. Había mucho caos, desorden. No hubo orden. Por lo tanto, esta persona no siempre podía supervisarnos porque estaba ocupada haciendo otras cosas. Por lo tanto, hubo mucha desorganización.*

Yes, they were similar. The problem in Mexico was if the teacher was unable to attend class that day, the classroom would be left unsupervised with only students left alone. There was a lot of chaos. There was no order. Therefore, there was a lot of disorganization. [2] p. 13

Interviewer: To clarify if a teacher was absent there was not substitute teacher to replace for the day.

Leticia: *No, solo si por alguna razón otro maestro no impartía clases en ese momento, solo entonces ayudarían con las clases sin supervisión. Pero esto fue muy raro. Casi no había nadie que ayudara a supervisar las clases.*

No, only if for some reason another teacher did not hold class at that time, then only then they would assist with classes unsupervised. But this was very rare. There was hardly anyone to help supervise classes. [2] p. 13

In this next example Leticia focuses more on the benefits of U.S. schools in comparison to Reynosa schools. There is an emphasis on the overall organization of the structures that South Texas Middle School has in place, from student discipline to staffing of classrooms, to instruction.

Interviewer: Tell me about your schooling here in the U.S.

Leticia: *Creo que aquí las cosas están mucho más organizadas. Todo. Los estudiantes conocen y siguen las reglas de la escuela porque en México casi ningún estudiante prestaría atención a las reglas de la escuela. Por lo tanto, aquí las reglas y estructuras que existen realmente me sorprenden. Todo está muy organizado. En cuanto a mis clases y calificaciones, creo que lo estoy haciendo bien. Siempre me ha ido bien en la escuela. Los profesores explican muy bien las cosas a los alumnos. Sus explicaciones son buenas y claras.*

I think that things are much more organized here. Everything. The students know and follow school rules because over in Mexico hardly no students would pay attention to school rules. Therefore, here the rules and structures that are in place really surprise me. Everything is very organized. In terms of my classes and grades, I think I am doing well. I have always done well in school. The teachers explain things very well to the students. Their explanations are good and clear.

Leticia stresses also on the inequalities of student discipline in U.S. schools versus Reynosa schools. A benefit she points out is that her teachers explain things very well to the students in the U.S. and students follow school rules. Across the border, in the U.S. students are well behaved and “follow rules.” She has formed a social construct in the belief that “*Todo está muy organizado*”, very organized here.

The next participant shares her experiences comparing her school in Reynosa versus U.S. schools. Carmen again is a fourth-year recent immigrant and did have the opportunity to attend both Elementary and Middle school in the U.S. She begins by describing her experience in Reynosa schools with relation to her teachers. Carmen talks about the lack of professionalism, as a form of a structural inequality experienced in Mexico.

Interviewer: Tell me about your school in Reynosa? How was it over there?

Entonces, iba a la escuela por la mañana y por la tarde. Bueno, mis profesoras no eran tan buenas en realidad.

So, I would attend school in the morning and afternoon. Well my teachers were not that good in reality. [2] p. 19

Carmen: Una vez, me gustaba borrar la pizarra y cosas así, y una vez ocurrió un accidente. Estaba borrando la pizarra con un amigo. ¿Sabes qué son los pupitres, como los escritorios? Y bueno, yo estaba de pie en esta mesa y mi amigo estaba de pie en un banco. Entonces, mi amigo se baja y el banco se cae y me corté el labio con el borde de la mesa. De acuerdo, entonces ocurrió ese accidente y me llevaron al médico. Bien, luego de que esto sucedió me llevaron a otra escuela. En esta escuela, solo hice el primer grado y la otra escuela hice el segundo, tercero y cuarto grado.

Once, I used to like to erase the chalkboard and things like that and once an accident occurred. I was erasing the board with a friend. Do you know what “pupitres” are, like desks? And well, I was standing on this table and my friend was standing on a bench. So, my friend gets off and the bench fell and I cut my lip with the edge of the table. Okay, so that accident occurred and they took me to the doctor. Okay, then after this occurred they

took me to another school. At this school, I only did the first grade and the other school I did second, third, and fourth grade. [2] p. 19

Carmen here elaborates on how her teachers in one of her schools in Mexico had no patience with the students and would shout at them. Carmen provides an example of an accident that occurred in her elementary school and describes that this resulted in her moving schools. Perhaps the lack of classroom management or teacher quality, resulted in her parent's decision to move her to another school. Carmen's experiences tie well with LatCrit theory and the push-pull factor. The inequalities in Carmen's schools in Mexico, lack of funding, and unprofessionalism pushed her parents to move her from schools in Mexico and eventually moved her into U.S. schools. The U.S. offered positive aspects that encouraged Carmen's family to seek better educational opportunities.

Parents had similar experiences when comparing Reynosa schools to U.S. schools and how there were more benefits weighing in on their children attending U.S. schools. With this first parent Gerardo's mom, she stresses that in U.S. schools her son Gerardo has more access to learn English and is provided with access to technology.

Interviewer: Comparing the school in Mexico, you say there are differences. There is more access to learn English here, any other things that are different comparing school over there than here? [P] p. 30

Gerardo's Mom: *Pues sí, mucho más allá, no había muchas actividades como las de acá, como deportes, actividades. Por ejemplo, Gerardo está en un club. Allá, no había nada de esto. Libros todas esas cosas, tecnología hay más acceso aquí. Por aquí Gerardo, suena gracioso, pero allá tendrían que llevar demasiados libros, así que cuando llegamos me dijo: "Cómprame una mochila grande porque me van a dar muchos libros". Y en*

realidad, no sabíamos que solo le iban a dar una computadora. Eso fue una gran diferencia para él. Llevar demasiados libros le haría doler la espalda. Creo que esas fueron las mayores diferencias. Quizás en términos de sus estudios quizás fue lo mismo, aprendiendo lo mismo o cosas similares, pero en términos de beneficios, Estados Unidos está mucho más avanzado en esas cosas.

Well yes, a lot more, over there, there was not many activities like the ones here, like sports, activities. For example, Gerardo is in a club. Over there, there was none of this.

Books all those things, technology there is more access here. Over here Gerardo, it sounds funny but over there they would have to carry way too many books so, when we got here he told me, “Buy me a big back pack because they are going to give me a lot of books.”

And in reality, we didn’t know that they were only going to give him a computer. That was a big difference for him. Carrying too many books would make his back hurt. I think those were the biggest differences. Maybe in terms of his studies perhaps it was the same, learning the same or similar things, but in terms of benefits, the U.S. is so much more advanced in those things. [P] pp. 30-31

Gerardo’s mom outlines the benefits she sees with her son attending South Texas Middle School. She elaborates on having access to sports, clubs, and technology. An inequality that she does focus in on is about the U.S. being more advanced with the benefits her son Gerardo receives. This ties with the literature on CRT tenant of intersectionality. This parent recognizes oppressions and privileges. She understands that although the education in Mexico and the U.S. may be similar, the benefits in U.S. education far outweigh those of Mexico. Here her son has more opportunities from those U.S. benefits that can later turn into a job, or career.

This next parent is Carmen's aunt, similar to the previous parent, she also stresses on the benefits of U.S. schools in comparison to Reynosa schools.

Interviewer: You tell me that in Reynosa, you didn't feel comfortable. What was the difference in the environment? [P] 40

Carmen's Aunt: *Bueno, la escuela estaba afuera. Aquí están adentro y todo es diferente. Aquí hay computadoras y allá no hay ninguna. Pero lo hago para ofrecerles una vida mejor aquí en los EE. UU. Estén haciendo bien aquí.*

Well, the school was outside. Here they are inside and everything is different. Here there are computers and over there, there is none. But, I do it to offer them a better life here in the U.S. That was the reason they chose to come here. They are doing well here. [P] pp. 40-41

Interviewer: Okay, so you have told me that the difference you see with the education they received in Mexico compared to here. Anything that you find similar between school in Mexico and here? [P] p. 41

Carmen's Aunt: *No, aquí las cosas son muy diferentes; de ellos ofreciendo a los estudiantes una computadora para llevar a casa. Todo es bueno.*

No, here things are very different; from them offering the students a computer to bring home. Everything is good. [P] p. 41

This example demonstrates the evident inequalities not only with buildings but with the overall educational rights of immigrant students. Carmen's aunt attributes bringing Carmen to study in U.S. schools as affording her an opportunity for a "better life." A pull-factor for Carmen's aunt are the resources in U.S. schools and connects this as offering Carmen a "better

life.” But is this the reality? Are U.S. schools really offering immigrant students a quality education?

Analysis of Reynosa Schools vs. U.S. Schools and Inequalities

The student and parent *testimonios* on inequalities comparing Reynosa schools to U.S. schools, were organized around three subthemes: structural inequalities of school buildings, professionalism with school staff, and access to technology. Students and parents in this study share their experiences in Reynosa and U.S. schools forming critical reflections of these experiences. In addition, CRT helped to give a perspective supplementing with LatCrit to give meaning to the lived experiences of recent immigrant students and their parents on their perspectives of Reynosa schools versus U.S. schools. Also, the push-pull factor that drives immigration was centered around the subthemes. Findings demonstrated evidence that participants found more benefits in attending U.S. schools. Student participants found there was more structure and access to technology and other resources in U.S. schools versus Reynosa schools. Parents found that their children also had more access to technology and more opportunities in U.S. schools.

A structural inequality pointed out by students when describing the school buildings in Reynosa were said to be in single classroom settings with no air-conditioning. Utilizing the CRT framework to highlight the role of racism in educational systems, as represented with the inequalities in school buildings in Reynosa versus U.S. schools were significant. In the U.S. students are for the most part in school buildings and classrooms are indoors with air-conditioning. The literature on CRT and education argues that the cause of poverty in conjunction with the condition of their schools and schooling is institutional and structural racism (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Carmen's Aunt: *Bueno, la escuela estaba afuera. Aquí están adentro y todo es diferente.*

Well, the school was outside. Here they are inside and everything is different. [P] 40

Poor conditions in Mexico is a push-factor that contributes to immigrants leaving Mexico and coming to the U.S. In Romero (2008), describes immigration in the U.S. stating there is a "preoccupation with assimilation in accepting White, middle-class standards as the norm" (p. 25). Immigrants see white, middle-class culture is equated with educational success.

Beto: *Bueno, la escuela aquí es más. La escuela tiene más cosas que el otro lado.*

Well, the school here is more. The school has more things than over there. [1] p. 7

The literature on CRT supports that schools who serve poor students of color are unlikely to have access to these material resources and consequently, students will have little or no opportunity to learn despite the attempt to mandate educational standards (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In this study a pull-factor that immigrant parents reported for coming to the U.S. was in search of "better" opportunities for their families. Education was one of these "better" opportunities.

A CRT analysis of immigration leads one to consider several issues that are crucial to understanding the position of racialized groups. One of these issues being intersectionality and this becomes crucial in theorizing about the immigrant experience in a nation that has a history of social exclusion by race, class, gender, and citizenship (Romero, 2008). In addition, LatCrit is a theory that elucidates Latinas/Latinos' multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression (Delgado Bernal, 2002, p. 108). The experiences of recent immigrants in this study demonstrate their liking to U.S. schooling practices, this includes professionalism of U.S. school staff. However, do these practices really give students "better" opportunities?

Another finding common in the data was on the use of technology. Students in Mexico did not use computers, a difference they noted from the U.S. where here they use computers and their classes are held virtually.

Gerardo: Here everything has to be online. [2] p. 4

The use of technology was absent in schools in Mexico and heavily used in U.S. schools. This inequality in resources was a push-factor that drove parents away from Mexico schools. In support Jupp et al. (2018), describe immigrant and transnational experiences as,

Providing a conceptual content for discussions on South-North immigration in the U.S, North-South migrations ‘home’ and deportation experiences, undocumented workers in the workplace and in human trafficking, and the perpetual push-pull and in-between space that make Latinxs permanent brown-skinned “foreigner’ that, regardless of nationality, might be told at any time to Go back to Mexico (p. 310).

Parents also expressed their thoughts on inequalities noted from schools in Mexico compared to the U.S., making note of the lack of computers in schools in Mexico.

Carmen’s Aunt: *Libros todas esas cosas, tecnología hay más acceso aquí.*

Books all those things, technology there is more access here.

Student and parent participants reflected on experiences with comparing schools in Reynosa versus schools in the U.S. There were several inequalities mentioned and the most prevalent were about school buildings, professionalism and technology access. The *testimonios* accentuate inequalities on the other side, as respondents ostensibly want to “come here” and perceive the wealth of resources, especially technology access, English, etc. CRT does not really deal with racialized inequalities across borders. This needs to be better theorized in CRT if we follow the push-pull factors of massive Global South immigration patterns.

Reflections of Finding 3

The literature to support the findings of inequalities present in Mexico and U.S. schools ties with Critical Race Theory, referring to two CRT tenets, the permanence of racism and intersectionality referencing (Jupp, Regina Berry, Morales, & Mogush Mason, 2018, Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Participants shared their experiences of Reynosa schools versus U.S. and found more benefits in U.S. schools. At South Texas Middle School where the facility is over 40 years old, and the student population is over 90% economically disadvantaged, these types of racism are inevitably present and crossed borders for immigrant students. I have always attended U.S schools and my experiences have been different from those of the student participants in this study in that regard. I attended elementary school and middle school in the late 80s and early 90s and access to technology was not a requirement in those years. Similar to the student participants, I did carry around a backpack full of books and notebooks since the primary method on instruction was in person, therefore books and materials were a must at all times. As an educator in the mid-2000s, students attending U.S schools have had access to technology either through computer use from a class PC or school computer lab. This is a pull-factor for parents, as access to technology in Mexico schools is not evident from the data. From a CRT perspective these inequalities of school resources from Mexico schools, who serve poorer students; the lack of access to material resources; these students will consequently have little or no opportunity to learn despite the attempt to mandate educational standards. Although South Texas is a Title One school, considered to have a great majority of students of low socioeconomic status in the district, it is still better resourced and staffed than what immigrant students reported as to the conditions of their schooling in Reynosa. This is a paradox that CRT tenets do not yet theorize as they tend to refer only to U.S. conditions on the permanence of racism.

Currently many changes have taken place with regards to in person and virtual instruction. With the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, the methods of instructional delivery have changed for most U.S. school districts. In my present district of employment for example, all students are provided with a Chromebook to access their classes and although we have returned to in person instruction, some students continue to have the option of attending classes virtually or in person. Most assignments and assessments are done online and the use of books, paper, pencil and other material are minimizing, as all these resources can be accessed through the use of technology. This has been a pull-factor, while inequalities in Mexico schools and U.S. schools are a push-factor for immigrant families and their decision to come to the U.S. The next finding discusses more about immigrant student participation in their classes and extracurricular activities.

Finding 4

Participation in Classes & Extra Curriculars, Narrow Evidence of Participation

The fourth finding in this study describes the participation of recent immigrant students in classrooms and extra-curricular events. Students in this part of the interview were asked about their participation and some share examples of what that looks like in the classroom for them. The responses from students consisted of “Yes they involve me,” “Yes I participate,” “Yes they include me.” “Yes, they always want me to participate”. Students however did not elaborate on the exact involvement of their participation. Although students said they did not talk or speak very much in class, they still felt they were included by the teacher and peers to participate with everything. Drawing from LatCrit frameworks in this study, to consider the intersectionality of race, immigration status and language that undocumented students experience in their educational careers (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, Perez Huber, 2010) will be used to support findings of

these narrow descriptions of participation from students. Also, literature on Subtractive Schooling that encompasses subtractive assimilationist policies and practices that are designed to divest Mexican students of their culture and language (Valenzuela, 1999) will be referenced.

Themed Responses of Participation in Classes and Extra Curriculars

The following are examples experienced by students about their participation in classes and extra curriculars.

Interviewer: Okay, so do you feel like the school activities here in the classroom and maybe P.E., Band, Electives; do you feel like you are included here?

Gerardo: Yes, I feel like they are really good and I feel they will help prepare me for the future. [2] p. 5

Interviewer: For example, tell me one Elective that you have?

Gerardo: I have P.E. [2] p. 5

Interviewer: So, if the Teacher is doing an activity in the class do you feel they involve you or do they leave you out?

Gerardo: Yes, they involve me. [2] p. 5

Gerardo: In all the classes, Math, Science, the kids include me. [2] p. 5

Gerardo although was not very specific with the examples he provided about his participation, he did share some prevalent phrases, such as, “Yes they involve me.” “They treat me the same as the other students”. For this student, he is regarding the equality in treatment of all students as being included in the classroom. However, he is unable to explain what this inclusion looks like. This ties with the literature on Chicana/Latina *testimonios* explain that students who are Spanish-dominant can have perceived deficiencies and a sense of academic inferiority (Perez Huber & Cueva, 2012).

In the following example, during the Focus Group meeting, Gerardo repeats the phrase “they include me in everything”, yet does not provide any specific example of what this looks like.

Me: Gerardo, I know last year you were in P.E., now you are in other scheduled Electives. How do you feel that you are included? [F] p. 27

Gerardo: Yes, I kind of like the way they include me in everything and they always want me to participate in some kind of stuff, and it’s really good. [F] p. 27

Although Gerardo preferred that his interview to be conducted in English, and he said that it was rare for him to speak Spanish, his responses were quite redundant and limited with other vocabulary. This may be due to his limited English and tends to fall back on using repetitive high frequency words.

The next participant Beto, when asked about his participation and involvement with activities and extra curriculars had similar responses to the previous participant. Beto is a first-year recent immigrant and did request that his interview be conducted in Spanish.

Me: Do you feel that you are included here in events, activities, in the classroom? [2] p. 10

Beto: *Si*. Yes. [2] p. 10

Me: Give me an example of how you are part of something that is happening? If they are doing an activity, how do they include you?

Beto: *Bueno, yo diría que en participar*. Well I’d say in participating. [2] p. 10

Interviewer: Do you feel that the teachers are assisting you with what you need in the classroom at South Texas Middle School? [2] p. 11

Beto: *Bueno sí, ellos me ayudan*.

Well yes, they do help me. [2] p. 11

Interviewer: How do the teachers help you? Give me an example.

Beto: *Bueno, como si tuviera un problema con Matemáticas, Ciencias o Arte, me dicen que esto va con esto, esto va en contra de esto, esto suma con esto.*

Well like if I have a problem with like Math, Science, or Art, they tell me like this goes with this, this goes against this, this sums with this. [2] p. 11

Beto, was also very narrow with his examples provided about how he is able to participate with activities in the classroom, referring to “*Si, ellos me ayudan*”, “*Esto va con esto*”. When asked about his extra- curricular classes he mentioned that he was not in a P.E. class this year because he did not know how to get into that class. He did mention that he liked the way his teachers help, however did not mention any specific way.

Interviewer: Like in sports, in your P.E. class, are you participating there?

Beto: *No, no en educación física.* No, not in P.E. [2] p. 10

Interviewer: Are you in P.E. class this year?

Beto: No. [2] p. 10

Beto: *No sé cómo entrar en una clase de educación física.*

I don't know how to get into a P. E. class. [2] p. 11

The responses shared by Beto were very narrow and restricted. I attribute this to be because Beto is a first-year recent immigrant to the U.S. Prior, Beto had described that they help and include him in his classes however there was no evidence to support this inclusion from his story. The literature on Subtractive Schooling indicates that Mexican immigrant youth, whose schooling experiences demonstrate that schools may be simultaneously subjectively additive and objectively subtractive (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 162). Although, Beto states that he is included and feels that he is a part of activities, but then on the other hand he is objectively excluded, first by

not given choice of classes. He gets placed in classes that the school sees are fit for him to take. Second, he is unaware of how to even get into P.E. class. Furthermore, the literature on Subtractive Schooling referencing Valenzuela (1999), mentions that in discussions with immigrant youth about their attitudes toward school suggest a need to reconsider the bases for their purported “politeness” (p. 13). Beto does as he is told. He doesn’t question or ask for information. This is very likely the case with Beto, and the act of not knowing how to get into a P.E. class. In support, Quiroz (2001) in a study of narrative inquiry on Latino 8th grade students’ schooling experiences, indicated that although these Latino children had two languages, they had no voice, at least in matters related to their schooling (p. 328). That seems like the case with immigrant students in this study. Their voices are unheard in the school.

The findings from the next participant Leticia, also a first-year recent immigrant from Reynosa, were similar to the previous. Despite that Leticia says she doesn’t talk much, she said that she is “included in everything”. She did include a few more examples as to her participation in the classroom and extra-curriculars although these examples were narrow in their description. Her limited understanding of English was mentioned as a factor that required teacher and peers to further assist her in class.

Interviewer: Do you feel that they include you in school activities in or out of the classroom? [2] p. 14

Leticia: *Sí, los profesores me incluyen en el aula y también en las actividades. Los estudiantes también me incluyen a mí. No hablo mucho, pero me incluyen en todo.*

Yes, the teachers include me in the classroom and in activities too. The students also include me too. I don’t talk a lot but they do include me in everything. [2] p. 14

Interviewer: For example, give me an example of how you are included, let's say in your Math classroom if they are doing an activity there?

Leticia: *Hay mucha participación en la resolución de problemas. Si estamos en grupos, también me incluyo con temas de Matemáticas sobre comparar, por ejemplo, me involucro. Si hay momentos en los que no entiendo lo que tenemos que hacer porque está explicado en inglés, el profesor siempre me pregunta y me tiene en cuenta. Además, los alumnos del grupo me toman en consideración y me ayudan.*

There is a lot of participation with solving problems. If we are in groups, I am also included with Math themes about comparing for example, I get involved. If there are times when I don't understand what we need to do because it was explained in English, the teacher always asks me and takes me into account. Also, the students there in the group take me into consideration and help me. [2] p. 14

Interviewer: Do you ask the teacher for help or do they come to you?

Leticia: *Bueno en realidad no. Realmente no pido ayuda. Si los profesores me piden mi opinión, ahí es donde les digo que no entiendo o que me confundo. Por lo general, hago un esfuerzo concertado para comprender el material por mi cuenta.*

Well not really. I really don't ask for help. If the teachers ask for my opinion, that is where I tell them that I don't understand or if I got confused. I usually make a concerted effort to understand the material on my own. [2] p. 14

Interviewer: So, you problem solve for yourself before asking for help?

Leticia: *Si.* Yes. [2] p. 14

Although Leticia was more independent with her learning and relied more on her problem-solving skills to decipher class material, she did say that her teachers helped her and checked for understanding. She was unable to provide any specific examples of this teacher help. In this example Leticia appears to be doing the learning on her own. Her inclusion in the classroom does not say very much about participation from the student. The supports provided are only for English translations and checking for understanding about language rather than content skills. Neither the teacher nor the classroom environment allowed Leticia to see her own strengths as a fluently Bilingual learner. The literature on Subtractive Schooling when referring to subtractive assimilation and caring literature supports this claim.

When asked about her participation with extra-curriculars Leticia reiterated “*Mis maestros me incluyen.*” She does mention how English is a barrier for her with her level of understanding of announcements. She felt that as a result of her limited ability to comprehend what was being said, she was unable to participate in certain things in school.

Interviewer: What about you Leticia? Are you included in school activities?

Leticia: *Bueno, sí. Mis maestros me incluyen. Con los alumnos con los que no tengo mucha comunicación, pero, además, no me tratan mal. Entonces sí, me siento cómodo, bien.*

Well yes. My teachers include me. With students I don't have a lot of communication with but also, they do not treat me bad. So yes, I feel comfortable, fine. [F] p. 27

Once again, Leticia says that her teachers include her but is unable to provide any specific examples of this inclusion. The literature on LatCrit and race ties in with this example, as one can be victimized by structural racism within a Native versus non-Native frame (Perez Huber, 2010,

p. 79). Although this inclusion gives Leticia a sense of participation, there is no evidence of any real participation.

Interviewer: What support would you like to receive more of while attending school at South Texas Middle School?

Leticia: *No creo que necesite más apoyo en este momento. Pero cuando entré aquí por primera vez no tuve la oportunidad de elegir mis clases extracurriculares porque entré después de que la escuela ya había comenzado. Pero estoy bien a pesar de eso. Sin embargo, hay actividades que suceden en la escuela y anuncios para esto o aquello siempre se hacen en inglés y esto me confunde un poco. Por ejemplo, una actividad para crear una página para el anuario. Mi profesor de Arte simplemente notificó a los estudiantes y les proporcionó información sobre la actividad, pero no entendí del todo porque todo estaba en inglés y no estoy acostumbrado a recibir información y a trabajar en las cosas de forma independiente, pero estoy trabajando en esta. Por lo tanto, no entendí muy bien la actividad y no pude participar, pero la encontré interesante.*

I don't think I need any more support right now. But when I first entered here I was not given the opportunity to choose my extra-curricular classes because I entered after school had already started. But I am fine despite that. There are however activities that happen around the school and announcements for this or that are always done in English and this confuses me a little. For example, an activity to create a page for yearbook. My Art teacher simply notified the students and provided them with information over the activity, but I didn't quite understand because everything was in English and I am not accustomed to receiving information and for me to work on things independently, but I am working on

this. Therefore, I didn't understand the activity too well and didn't get to participate, but I found it interesting.

Interviewer: To clarify, you would like more support to understand upcoming events, activities, you would like more of an opportunity to be explained in Spanish, so that you can understand and perhaps participate with the activity?

Leticia: *Si. Eso.* Yes that.

Leticia again restates "*Mis maestros me incluyen*". This example demonstrates that student understands participation to being extra curriculars. She emphasizes on information shared in English for extra-curricular participation, however she doesn't get to do those. Evidently the language barrier affects Leticia's ability to acquire information. Using the literature CRT framework to re define internalized racism as the acceptance of a racial hierarchy in which whites are consistently ranked above people of color (Kohli, Johnson, Perez Huber, 2006, p. 183). Overall, Leticia would like more support in having announcements translated to her in Spanish so she is able to get more involved and be able to participate with extra-curricular activities, that at this time she is unable to get a handle on.

The next participant is Carmen, she like previous students pointed out a similar positive regard saying that her teachers have "all have helped", "they always include me", "they are good to me", that "everything is good". However, like the previous, Carmen did not share any specifics as to what this help or inclusion looked like in the classroom.

Me: Do you feel that you are included in your classes? [2] p. 20

Carmen: *Si.* Yes. [2] p. 20

Me: If they are doing activities in your classes or Electives, do you feel they include you or not?

Carmen: *Sí, siempre me han incluido. Los estudiantes, mis amigos, los profesores. Nunca me han dejado a un lado.*

Yes, they have always included me. The students, my friends, the teachers. They have never set me aside. [2] p. 20

Me: Do you feel that the teachers are helping you with your academic needs here at South Texas Middle School?

Carmen: *Si.* Yes. [2] p. 20

Me: Like how, give me an example of how they assist you?

Carmen: *Son muy buenos conmigo. Cuando necesito ayuda con algo así, me ayudan mucho a hacer mi trabajo. Como la semana pasada, no sabía cómo hacer algo en mi clase de inglés y le pedí ayuda a la maestra y ella lo hizo, así que encontré la respuesta.*

They are very good to me. When I need help with something like they help me a lot to do my work. Like last week I didn't know how to do something in my English class and I asked the teacher for help and she did so I found the answer. [2] p. 20

Me: All of your teachers have helped you?

Carmen: *Todas ellas me han ayudado.* All of them have helped me. [2] p. 20

Carmen, although is consistent with mentioning that all of her teachers have helped her, her explanation of what this looks like is very narrow.

Analysis of Participation In Classes and Extra Curriculars

The findings from this study on actual student participation in classes and extra curriculars were consistent with students mentioning “Yes they involve me,” “Yes I participate,” “Yes they include me.” “Yes, they always want me to participate”. However, students were unable to provide specific examples of their participation in classes. Despite students saying they did not

talk or speak very much in class, they still felt they were included by their teachers and peers to participate with everything. Literature on Subtractive Schooling, drawing from Valenzuela (1999), suggesting that schools may be subtractive, beyond the concept of subtractive assimilation, need to include content and organization of curriculum (p. 27). Subtractive schooling thus widens the analytical scope to examine other ways that schools subtract resources from youth (Valenzuela, 1999). In another case study on the experiences of minority elementary students situated within a prestigious school district, in order to further understand the process of subtractive schooling. Consequently, the school's assimilation agenda is held in conflict with the school's ideology of multiculturalism (Garza & Crawford, 2005). Findings reveal that in practice, native language maintenance and the validation of diverse identities are not active components of the English-immersion curriculum and are therefore not significant elements of the school's recipe for success (Garza & Crawford, 2005). Also using literature from LatCrit referencing (Perez Huber, 2010) to provide a framework to support these findings about narrow student participation in their classes.

Gerardo: Yes, I kind of like the way they include me in everything and they always want me to participate in some kind of stuff, and it's really good. [F] p. 27

Gerardo was not specific with how they include him or what his exact participation looked like, only elaborated that they included him and always wanted him to participate. The data on subtractive schooling relates to Gerardo's sense of participation as a form of assimilation on the part of the school. Because of its focus on how immigrant students learn rather than how they are schooled, the subtractive assimilation literature accords insufficient attention to how the organization of schooling can be just as consequential to the academic progress of minority youth (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 27). This ties in with participation of students in extra curriculans

demonstrating that although students are passing their classes and feel they are included, is this inclusion a reality? Are immigrant students really getting prepared academically to challenge higher skills as a result of their definition of participation?

Leticia: Sí, los profesores me incluyen en el aula y también en las actividades. Los estudiantes también me incluyen a mí. No hablo mucho, pero me incluyen en todo.

Yes, the teachers include me in the classroom and in activities too. The students also include me too. I don't talk a lot but they do include me in everything. [2] p. 14

Carmen: Sí, siempre me han incluido. Los estudiantes, mis amigos, los profesores. Nunca me han dejado a un lado.

Yes, they have always included me. The students, my friends, the teachers. They have never set me aside. [2] p. 20

Participants are consistent with sharing their overall feelings saying positive comments about their experiences about being included in their classes, however what is the quality of such participation? Such as in this example with Gerardo.

Gerardo: Yes, I kind of like the way they include me in everything and they always want me to participate in some kind of stuff, and it's really good. [F] p. 27

Gerardo states that he "is included in everything", however does not provide any examples of how he is included in participating. In Valenzuela (1999), when discussing attitudes among immigrant students, states that as "immigrants accommodate to the mores of the school's informal status hierarchy, an order that is based on the privileging of English as both the medium of instruction and the ticket to participation in faculty-sponsored school activities, they achieve a better fit" (p. 186). Gerardo although is a second-year recent immigrant, who speaks and asks to be spoken to in English feels that he is included and that he is asked to participate in his classes

feels that “all is good.” He feels apart of this school and has acculturated to the ways of South Texas Middle school. Leticia also shares a similar positive feeling saying she feels “comfortable” and “fine”.

Leticia: *Bueno, sí. Mis maestros me incluyen. Entonces sí, me siento cómodo, bien.*

Well yes. My teachers include me. So yes, I feel comfortable, fine. [F] p. 27

The literature on subtractive schooling when referring to pro-school ethos and caring about school, mentions there are differences in the ways in which Mexican American and immigrant students perceive their schooling experiences. Immigrant students “acquiesce” or accept reluctantly something but without protest (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 24). In addition, the literature on Subtractive Schooling elaborates on cultural values like respect (*respeto*) encourage deference and docility, a sense of powerlessness or a belief that they are not “entitled” to openly defy school authority just as a powerfully explains their comportment, especially for the more recently arrived (p. 14). Also, the literature on LatCrit, which examines experiences unique to the Latina/o community such as immigration status, language, ethnicity and culture (Perez, Huber, 2010) helps to support data. A LatCrit analysis has allowed researchers to develop the conceptual framework of racist nativism, a lens that highlights the intersection of racism and nativism (Perez Huber, 2010). In addition, literature on CRT, in Obiakor and Green (2011), mention that it is common knowledge that race is socially constructed. Most children have a sense of their own identities and those of others by the time they enter school (p. 19.) In addition, Kohli, Johnson and Perez (2006) mention, internalized racism has been defined as the internalization of negative stereotypes or judgments of one’s racial group (p. 2). In this study, although recent immigrant students did not speak of any derogatory terms when referring to them, such as “newcomers” or “being made fun of for not speaking English” as some participants did share insecurities about, on the contrary,

participants only shared the positive examples about their inclusion with participation in their classes and extra curriculars. Students did share that they did not speak very much in their classes. This silence may be due to avoid negative racial perceptions and possibly identifying themselves as outsiders. Miller (2000), in studying language use, identity, and social interaction of migrant students in Australia, points out that minority students cannot maintain their interpersonal relations with their English-speaking peers due to their limited English proficiency. Thus, these students are excluded from the mainstream school network, although the minority students may desire to connect to the majority (Trang & Hamid, 2017, p. 4).

Leticia: La mayoría de las veces los profesores preguntan si entiendo. Como los profesores saben que no domino exactamente el idioma inglés, suelen preguntar siempre si entendí todo y ahí es donde aclaro cualquier duda que pueda tener.

The majority of times the teachers ask if I understand. Since teachers know that I have not exactly mastered the English language, they usually always ask if I understood everything and that is where I clarify any doubt I may have.

These examples from the findings carry a silence from the students to not say anything negative of their experiences attending U.S. schools. In support, the literature from Perez Huber (2010) supports this claim describing how Students of Color internalize nativism in U.S. schools through the acceptance of a racial hierarchy, where whites are consistently ranked above People of Color. The explanation goes beyond the “internalization of stereotypes imposed by the white majority about People of Color. It is the internalization of nativist beliefs, values, and worldviews inherent in white supremacy that can potentially result in negative self or racial group perceptions” (p. 91) In this study, these negative racial perceptions, may be the reason why students only had positive examples to share about their involvement with school activities.

Reflections of Finding 4

Recalling the times, I was a classroom teacher, students who were new to the country, recent immigrants from either Mexico or Central America, these students were not very vocal in the classroom. They did not volunteer to participate, or ask questions. They always seemed to want to blend in and not draw attention to themselves. I can say that the language barrier was a contributing factor to this. Compared to recent immigrants, most U.S. born students were fluent or usually spoke in English. I remember with immigrant students, I did have to do a lot of re-explaining, one-to-one teaching and provide plenty of encouragement for them to feel as if they were a part of the group. Outside of class they tended to gravitate to peers just like them, who were recent immigrants and they stuck to their click of peers. In my current role as a middle school administrator, not much has changed.

Students who are recent immigrants in classrooms, tend to require re-teaching, re-explaining and more one-to-one attention. They are the students who don't raise their hands to participate or volunteer to initiate tasks. These students tend to have feelings of powerlessness or a belief that they are not entitled as described in Valenzuela (1999). As their teacher, I understood this unwillingness to participate was to avoid negative racist comments from other students. Not knowing English is a big insecurity that not only the participants in this study shared, but with other students who are recent immigrants. It's a fear of humiliation, or fear of being outcasted. Recent immigrant students require more encouragement and prompting to be a part of the rest of the classroom groups. These students have to be strategically partnered with English speaking peers to help them build their own English language. Outside of the classroom, these students tend to be at the back of the line, observing the rest of the students. They socialize with peers just like them, who are other recent immigrants. As the year progresses recent immigrant students are

observed gaining more confidence with their social skills and slowly start participating in extra-curricular events. Perhaps they feel that as they gain more skills with language they are more prone to being accepted with the dominant culture at school. As is the case with Gerardo, who is a second-year recent immigrant and speaks mostly English. He tended to say “they include me in everything”, “everything is good.” Despite having insecurities about coming to U.S. schools at first, had only positive comments about his participation as a second-year immigrant, although did not provide any examples of his participation. Other students in this study, for example Carmen also mentioned that “they have always included me”, they have never set me aside” regarding her participation in school. This is perhaps because she has made progress with her English as a fourth-year immigrant to the U.S. Since she did mention she did struggle at first with her grades but then things got easier. Overall, students felt they were able to participate with classroom and extra curriculums. However, there was very narrow evidence of actual participation in this so-called “being included”. The fifth finding on Life in Reynosa vs. Life in Reynosa versus Life in the U.S., will cover more on other reasons aside from educational ones described in this section that participants had for coming to the U.S.

Finding 5

Life in Reynosa vs. Life in the U.S. Escaping Poverty, Crime and Insecurities *en el otro lado*.

The fifth finding in this study relates to the differences that participants shared about their life in Reynosa versus their life in the U.S. Reasons that parents reported to coming to the U.S. were due to crime in Mexico, poverty and to live a “better” life in the U.S due to insecurities in Mexico. Students and parents reported that living in the U.S. “*es menos peligroso*” or less dangerous. Another reason described by students was “*Es una mejor vida aqui,*” for a better life here. Participants were not specific about what a “better life” meant. Despite the dangers involved

with border crossing, the Mexican people find the importance of their children studying in the U.S as a reason to come to *el otro lado*. Literature from the border and LatCrit will be referenced to support the data. Anzaldua (1987), defines border as a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. Furthermore, borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them* (p. 3). The literature on LatCrit is a framework meant to function congruently with CRT, and gives educational researchers a more focused lens to examine the experiences of Latina/o students and their respective communities (Perez Huber, 2009). Historically the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) is one of the poorest regions in the U.S. with the highest unemployment. According to the Texas Tribune (2020), nearly 2.6 million Texans have filed for unemployment since March of 2020. In the RGV the lack of jobs even more pronounced. Despite the high poverty and high unemployment rates in the RGV, the living situation is still “better” in the U.S., according to participants in this study, than the conditions they have lived in Mexico.

Themed Responses on Life in Reynosa vs. Life in the U.S.

The following section demonstrates examples from students and parents on their life experiences in Reynosa versus their life experiences in the U.S.

In this first example student Gerardo is asked about the differences in living in Mexico and the U.S. Gerardo is a second-year recent immigrant and recalls his experiences living in Mexico and now in the U.S.

Interviewer: Your life over there in Reynosa, how was that different from here in the U.S.?

Gerardo: Like it's different because here it's safer than in Reynosa and over there it's a little dangerous and you have to be careful when you go out and here you can go out. You can be free to walk or something. [1] p. 1

Interviewer: Is there crime in Reynosa?

Gerardo: Yea. [1] p. 1

As previously stated high crime rates in Mexico was a prevalent reason for parents wanting to bring their children to the U.S. and this reason is carried over to the student participants as well. The literature of the border defines the border as a dividing line. This divide although only separated by the Rio Grande River is regarded by participants as the U.S. side, as “safer”.

In the next example Gerardo’s experiences living in Mexico and the U.S. focus on living life in the U.S. from a future stand point.

Interviewer: How do you feel about living here in the U.S.? [1] p. 3

Gerardo: Here it’s better than in Reynosa. It would be a better life. Like it will help me a lot to study here. [1] p. 3

This example demonstrates that Gerardo is hopeful of a better life. The literature on border in Anzaldua (1987) explains that Mexicans dream of coming to U.S. as form of a conquest or return to the homeland (p. 10).

The next participant Carmen, is a fourth-year recent immigrant also from Reynosa, Mexico. Her experiences coming to the U.S. were due to the crime rates taking place in Reynosa and her parents’ choice to send her to the U.S. to live with her guardian/aunt as a result.

Interviewer: Tell me about things that are different living in Mexico and here in the U.S.
[1] p. 17

Carmen: *Lo que es diferente es la gente, el país. Aquí es menos peligroso. Como eso.*

What is different are the people, the country. Here it is less dangerous. Like that. [1] p. 18

Carmen: *Pero no tan diferente. De alguna manera que en Reynosa es peligroso por disparos y no aquí.*

But, not that different. In a way that in Reynosa it is dangerous because of shooting and not here. [1] p. 18

Carmen like the other participants came to the U.S. escaping crime and insecurities in Mexico. Although she left her parents behind in Reynosa, she feels that the U.S. is a safer place to live.

This next parent, is not new to living in the U.S. She did not provide details about the exact length of time she has lived here or how she arrived to the U.S., only mentions that she has always lived in the U.S.

Interviewer: You said you have always been here. Beto comes from Reynosa correct?

Beto's Mom: *Sí, estuvo conmigo en Reynosa.* Yes, he was with me in Reynosa. [P] p. 34

Interviewer: So, you decided to bring him here to the U.S.?

Beto's Mom: *Si.* Yes. [P] p. 34

This parent was not specific about her frequent border crossings back fourth from the U.S. and Mexico, possibly due to work, nonetheless she chose to bring her son to the U.S. She elaborates on her reason for a "better life" in the U.S. This parent points out that crime in Mexico was a motivating reason for bringing her son to the U.S.

Interviewer: What made you decide to bring Beto here?

Beto's Mom: *La verdad es que aquí es una vida diferente y bueno uno quiere lo mejor para sus hijos y entonces era una vida mejor aquí, diferente a como se vive en el otro lado.*

The truth is that it is a different life here and well one wants the best for their children and so, it was a better life here, different than how one lives over there. [P] p. 34

The literature on LatCrit, talks about the pull factors associated with living a better life in the U.S. in terms of inequalities with education, jobs, etc. Beto's mom despite the discourses she encounters with border crossings and possible restrictions of returning to the U.S. chooses to risk this in search of a "better life" for her son in the U.S.

Interviewer: When I spoke to Beto, he told me that in Mexico, there was more crime; the streets were not safe. What do you think is the difference here?

Beto's Mom: *Aquí es diferente. No es que allí haya una tienda a la vuelta de la esquina. Los lugares están más cerca y no aquí. Allí hay más violencia. Mis hijos son varones y tienen que salir a trabajar o por el motivo que sea. Entonces, es una vida mejor aquí para ellos.*

Here it is different. It is not like over there that around the corner is a store. Places are closer and not here. Over there, there is more violence. My boys are male and they have to go out to work or whatever reason. So, it's a better life here for them. [P] p. 34

Interviewer: Did he work over there in Mexico? [P] p. 35

Beto's Mom: *Mi papá tiene un negocio de venta de tacos y Beto lo ayudaría. Mi padre le daría días para trabajar. Beto ayudaría a llevar las hieleras para colocar los tacos, refrigerios, cositas, limpieza, para hacer la compra, si necesitaba algo iría.*

My dad has a business of selling tacos and Beto would help him. My father would give him days to work. Beto would help to take the coolers to place the tacos, refreshments, small things, cleaning, to get groceries, if he needs something he would go. [P] p. 35

Beto's mom talks about the differences living in Reynosa, compared to living in the U.S. She spoke about the violence in Mexico and wanting a "better life" for her son in the U.S. Beto worked in Mexico as a twelve-year-old boy in a small family business. As in many Mexican

households, children start working at a very young age to help the adults with extra income. This ties in with literature on Latinx critical theory referring to South-North immigration to the U.S. and the push-pull factors as reasons for immigrants leaving Mexico. Despite risks associated with violence in Mexico that children are subjected to, the need for survival outweighs these risks.

The next parent is Leticia's Mom. She like the other parents saw the need to bring her daughter to the U.S. for more "opportunities" for not only her children but all the family. Leticia's mom like her daughter are first-year immigrants to the U.S. This parent talks about economic hardships in Mexico and escaping poverty coming to the U.S.

Interviewer: Tell me again, what make you decide to bring your children over here? To bring Leticia here?

Leticia's Mom: *Bueno, más que nada, el tipo de vida que se ha vivido aquí. Hay muchas más ventajas viviendo aquí, más por las oportunidades que hay para ellos. Por eso decidimos venir aquí. Alla es más difícil. No hay tantas oportunidades para todos. Además, la educación que reciben en el otro lado es, como diría... de menor calidad. Aparte de eso, tenemos que estar pagando y pagando y soltando dinero. Además, y el salario que ganamos allí no se extiende y no podemos llegar a fin de mes. Tenemos menos oportunidades y aquí es más fácil, a pesar de que no conocemos a nadie y mucha gente aquí nos ha ayudado. Además, por parte de la escuela, hemos recibido mucha ayuda y también para que los padres se eduquen.*

Well more than anything, the type of life that's lived over here. There are so many more advantages living here, more for the opportunities there are for them. That's why we decided to come here. Over there it's more difficult. There aren't as many opportunities

for everyone. Also, the education that they receive over there is, how shall I say... of less quality. Aside that we have to be paying and paying and letting go of money. Also, and the salary we earn over there doesn't stretch and we can't make ends meet. We are provided with less opportunities and here is easier, despite of not knowing anyone and a lot of people here have helped us out. Also, on the part of the school, we have gotten a lot of help and also for the parents to get an education as well. [P] p. 37

Leticia's Mom elaborates on the economic hardships her family went through in Mexico. Despite not having other family and not knowing anyone in the U.S. she chose to bring her family to the U.S. stating there are "more advantages" and "more opportunities."

The last parent/guardian was Carmen's Aunt. She is a resident of the U.S., although was born and raised in Reynosa, Mexico, where Carmen's parents still live. Carmen's Aunt mentions her reasons for bringing Carmen to the U.S. was to study and escaping crime in Mexico.

Interviewer: Why did you decide to bring Claudia over here to the U.S.?

Carmen's Aunt: *Para estudiar. Cuando crezca para poder defenderse con el lenguaje y hacer algo de sí misma. Y en Reynosa, sabes que las cosas van muy mal. Los llevaban a la escuela caminando. Entonces, hablé con mi hermano y la madre de Claudia y les dije que podía traer a Claudia para que estudiara.*

To study. And make something of herself. And in Reynosa, you know how things are very bad. They would take them to school walking. So, I spoke to my brother and Claudia's mother and told them that I could bring Claudia over here to study. [P] p. 40

Escaping crime in Mexico, was a reason for bringing Carmen to the U.S. The literature on the border describes border towns in Mexico as cities of vice, lawless, gateway cities to the other side (Taibo, 2002).

Analysis of Life in Reynosa vs. Life in the U.S.

Some reasons that parents reported for coming to the U.S. was to escape crime, poverty and insecurities in Mexico. In Valenzuela's (1999), study about the experiences of schooling for Mexican immigrant students, a common denominator that parents had for bringing their children to the U.S. was due to poverty in Mexico (p. 119). In the following example, Leticia's mom mentions her reasons for coming to the U.S. to include more opportunities in the U.S.

Leticia's Mom: *Hay muchas más ventajas viviendo aquí, más por las oportunidades que hay para ellos. Por eso decidimos venir aquí. Alla es más difícil. No hay tantas oportunidades para todos. Aparte de eso, tenemos que estar pagando y pagando y soltando dinero. Además, y el salario que ganamos allí no se extiende y no podemos llegar a fin de mes.*

Well more than anything, the type of life that's lived over here. There are so many more advantages living here, more for the opportunities there are for them. That's why we decided to come here. Over there it's more difficult. There aren't as many opportunities for everyone. Aside that we have to be paying and paying and letting go of money. Also, and the salary we earn over there doesn't stretch and we can't make ends meet. [P] p. 37

Another reason described by parents for coming to the U.S was as "*Es una mejor vida,*" for a better life. Participants were not specific about what "better life" meant. The literature described in Taibo (2002), states "From the border, the United States is a televised landscape at arm's length. A giant Babylonian supermarket where the meaning of life might be the ability to buy three distinct models of steam iron on the same day" (p. 29). I imagine this means that the U.S. is seen as a bountiful country full of hopes and prosperity, but also elusive excess. Taibo (2002), refers to being a foreigner by walking a few yards" (p. 29). Anzaldua (1987) also supports

this hope for prosperity, referring to south of the border, as “North America’s rubbish dump by [some nativist] Chicanos, *mexicanos* congregate in plazas to talk about the best way to cross” (p.11). The distance from Reynosa to the U.S. is close, and Beto’s mom has an idea of prosperity in coming the U.S. This idea of wanting a “better” life is a pull factor as she expresses her reason for bringing her son to the U.S.

Interviewer: What made you decide to bring him here?

Beto’s Mom: *La verdad es que aquí es una vida diferente y bueno uno quiere lo mejor para sus hijos y entonces era una vida mejor aquí, diferente a como se vive en el otro lado.*

The truth is that it is a different life here and well one wants the best for their children and so, it was a better life here, different than how one lives over there. [P] p. 34

This parent sees more opportunity living in the U.S. as compared to Mexico. The literature on the border says, “For many *mexicanos del otro lado*, the choice is to stay in Mexico and starve or move north and live” “*la conquista del pais poderoso del norte, los Estados Unidos*” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 10).

Another reason parents’ chose to bring their children to the U.S. was attributed to escaping crime in Mexico.

Interviewer: You tell me that in Reynosa, you didn’t feel comfortable. What was the difference in the environment?

Carmen’s Aunt: *Bueno, la escuela estaba afuera. Aquí están adentro y todo es diferente. Y bueno, cuando iba a visitarlos, me decían: “¡Madrina, habían balaseras!” y yo diría “No, ¿como?” No puedes correr riesgos aquí con los niños.*

Well, the school was outside. Here they are inside and everything is different. And well, when I would go visit them, they would tell me, “*Madrina, habían balaseras!*” and I would say “*No, ¿como?*” You can’t be taking chances here with the kids.

Beto’s mother also shares a similar concern with her son living in Mexico and the dangers with crime he is exposed to out in the streets.

Interviewer: And over there, I know that when I spoke to Beto, he told me that over there, there was more crime; the streets were not safe. What do you think is the difference here?

Beto’s Mom: *Alla hay más violencia. Mis hijos son varones y tienen que salir a trabajar o por el motivo que sea. Entonces, es una vida mejor aquí para ellos.*

Over there, there is more violence. My boys are male and they have to go out to work or whatever reason. So, it’s a better life here for them. [P] p. 34

In addition to the crime in Mexico, Beto’s mother elaborates that living in the U.S. is a “better life”, referring to safer environment lived in the U.S. Taibo (2002), describes the border saying that Mexican border towns like Tijuana, Mexico, are “gateway cities to the other side, cities of vice and lawless for the spineless gringo in search of adventure and raunchy sex and exoticism” (p. 30).

Reflections of Finding 5

My thoughts about the students and parent participants’ reasons for coming the U.S. from a personal point of view is that I agree with their reasons for “a better life” and it’s “less dangerous in the U.S.” Although I cannot say I have ever lived in Mexico however, my grandmother did for some part of her life. I did visit the city of Guradado, Mexico where my grandmother had family. I also visited San Luis Potosi, Mexico where my grandmother grew up. The living conditions at these places were much different than the ones I lived in the U.S.

Although Guardado and San Luis, Mexico were not border towns, poverty existed all over, from homes, to schools and businesses. I agree that these humble conditions are push-factors that drive people to leave Mexico in pursuit of a “better” life in the U.S. From my current position as a school administrator, I see the challenges that recent immigrants face coming to the U.S. Not only are they faced with struggles with immigration and some may have deportation experiences. Once in the U.S. immigrants encounter issues of being ‘foreigners’ to living here and attending schools. Although recent immigrants are observed to have insecurities with social ties in schools, they adjust and become part of the school environment over time. Attending schools in the U.S. is a pull-factor that advantages immigrants. They hope for prosperity and a better life. Parents see this as advantageous and a pull factor for coming to the U. S. It is paradoxical that entering into the poorest regions of the United States, things are still better than lived conditions experienced by participants in Mexico. CRT does not follow these contradictions and how transnational understandings and contradictions like students being “better off” in the poorest region of the U.S. is something that might need additional theoretical attention.

Summary

In considering the findings from this chapter, data reveals that immigrant students have an overall positive experience attending U.S. schools consistently mentioning *todo esta bien, me incluyen en todo, me tartan bien*. They regard learning English in U.S. schools as another positive experience, *En Mexico, son muy pocas oportunidades para las clases de inglés y muy superficiales, entonces aquí en la escuela poco a poco empezó a aprender*. Access to technology was another positive experience, *Aquí, nos dieron computadoras para que podamos estar en línea*. In search of more opportunities escaping insecurity in Mexico, *La verdad es que aquí es una vida diferente y bueno uno quiere lo mejor para sus hijos y entonces era una vida mejor aquí,*

diferente a como se vive en el otro lado. Escaping crime in Mexico, Alla hay más violencia. Entonces, es una vida mejor aquí para ellos. These example findings from data sources indicate the subjective experiences noted from participants about leaving Mexico and attending U.S. schools. Despite these positive experiences mentioned by participants, in analyzing the data findings indicate narrow descriptions of participation in U.S. schools from immigrant students. From my perspective, assimilationist practices on behalf of the school including ESL supports with translations, remedial programs, access to technology are the only efforts made for immigrant students' participation. Not enough efforts to support the linguistic development of immigrant student's in Spanish is provided by schools. As a result, students are passed on to fend as best they can with the English dominant practices that exist in U.S. schools; furthermore, creating gaps in their participation in school.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This conclusion provides a summary of the chapters in this study, including the research question: What are the *testimonios* of immigrant students in a middle school, and how do their narratives of schooling emerge in their stories? Drawing from CRT, LatCrit, Subtractive Schooling, Funds of Knowledge frameworks and literature on the border will be used to support data. Also, a summary of findings, implications for educators, and reflections centered around the five emergent themes found in this study. The summary of findings recaps on the five themes that emerged from the analysis in chapter four. Chapter five will focus on the discussion on implications for educators at South Texas Middle School as it relates to findings with immigrant student's classroom participation and perceptions. A reflection of the research will be included to reconsider instructional practices of inclusion that impact student's educational experiences in U.S. schools.

Summary of Chapters

Chapter one, introduced the purpose of this study, to gather and use the stories of immigrant students' educational experiences attending U.S. schools and their parents' discourses on border crossings. A background and history of the Rio Grande Valley going back to the 16th century. Literature on the border referencing Anzaldua (1987), and Paredes (1958) describing the RGV in a historical context. The reasons for using *testimonio* from a personal perspective was

included under the section, *Why testimonio?* Chapter two focused in more detail on the four emancipatory types of frameworks used in this study: CRT, drawing from Delgado and Stefancic (2017), LatCrit drawing from Delgado Bernal (2002) and Valdes (2005), Subtractive Schooling (Valenzuela, 1999), and Funds of Knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) as they relate to immigrant students' schooling experiences. Chapter three focused on the methodology section of this study, drawing from Perez Huber (2010). Using a qualitative approach, three types of qualitative methods were discussed: Narrative, Critical Narrative and *Testimonio*, however only *Testimonio* was used as the main sources of inquiry in this study. *Testimonio* interviews with four immigrant Mexican students and their schooling experiences were conducted at South Texas Middle School, including a student focus meeting. Also, *testimonio* interviews from the students' parents were included over their border crossing experiences and perspectives over their children's education. Chapter four depicts the summary of findings based on five emergent themes prevalent in the data as shown in the following section on Summary of Findings. Chapter five will close with a summary and conclusions of this study and will include a section for Implications for Educators at South Texas Middle School and some reflections. This story serves to disrupt stereotypes by demonstrating a lived experience of an immigrant student, which can be used to build critical consciousness and raise awareness of their perceptions of schooling experiences at South Texas Middle School. Lastly a conclusion and closing remarks will be included to sum up this chapter.

Summary of Findings

In analyzing patterns in the data, five recurrent emergent themes were prevalent. The findings were as follows: Transnational Immigrants from Reynosa, Preoccupation with English Language, Reynosa schools vs. U.S. Schools and Inequalities, Participation in Classes and Extra

Curriculars, Narrow Evidence of Participation, Life in Reynosa vs. Life in the U.S. Escaping Poverty, Crime and Insecurity *en el otro lado*.

Transnational Immigrants from Reynosa. This finding was centered around transnational immigrants from Reynosa. As it turned out all participants from this study came from Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico prior to attending South Texas Middle School. A city in Mexico just south of the border from the Rio Grande Valley. Participants were reluctant to share about their journey to the U.S. and mostly shared their reasons for coming to the U.S. leaving family members behind in Mexico. Literature on the border was used to support the data from this finding. This finding draws from Anzaldúa (1987) defining the border and describing stigmas associated with immigrants crossing from Mexico. Also, referencing Taibo (2002), on stigmas associated with being “foreigners” to the U.S. As the following data from participants tell where they came from in Mexico and reasons for coming the U.S.

Beto: Yo vengo de Reynosa. Estaba yendo a la escuela, pero luego empezó el COVID, y ya no hubo escuela. Eso era un problema para mi porque yo necesitaba aprender y mi mamá decidió que yo necesitaba venir al otro lado y aquí estoy.

I come from Reynosa. I was in school like the COVID started, there was no school and it was a problem for me because I needed to learn and my mother decided that I needed to come to the other side so here I am. [1] p. 7

Carmen: Yo vengo de Mexico, de Reynosa. Mi mama me mando a los Estados Unidos porque allá en México las cosas estaban mal.

I come from Mexico, from Reynosa. My mom sent me to the U.S. because over in Mexico it was very bad. My mom decided that I would come to live here with my aunt and to study here with my aunt. [1] p.17

Preoccupation with English Language. This finding demonstrates the preoccupation that originated in the data with the English language. Although there were efforts made by the school to provide students with ESL supports to promote English, there was no mention of how Spanish instruction was embedded into these supports nor any academic learning in Spanish. Parents looked at having their children learn English as a sense of accomplishment for future opportunities and a prioritizing reason for bringing their children to U.S. schools, while students saw the English language as a learning expectation and a sense of belonging with peers. Drawing from literature on LatCrit referencing Perez Huber (2010) on defining racism and contemporary nativism. Also, literature on Rio Grande Valley resistant traditions, referencing Garza, Eufrazio and Jupp (2021). Funds of knowledge referencing Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti (2017), on topics of English and computer use connectedness. As well as literature referencing Valenzuela (1999) on ESL programs in U.S. schools. The following are examples of data from participants over English language. Although students were not asked direct questions about language, participants were preoccupied with English.

Interviewer: Tell me about your schooling here in the U.S.? [2] p. 4

Gerardo: Here it's a little bit difficult because it's like in English and there are some words I don't know and I have to search it up.

Interviewer: What are your feelings of being here at school at South Texas Middle school in the U.S.? [1] p. 8

Beto: *Bueno, me tratan bien. Aquí, no sé inglés. Yo sé un poco. Me ayudan a aprender y todo eso y bueno, antes me sentía avergonzado porque no sabía inglés, pero luego, cuando me empezaron a hablar en español bien y bien, empecé a hacer amigos.*

Well they treat me well. Here, I don't know English. I know a little. They help me to learn and all that and well I used to feel embarrassed because I didn't know English but then when they started to speak to me in Spanish right and well I started to make friends.

Interviewer: Tell me about your schooling here in the U.S.

Leticia: *Sí, hay ocasiones en las que no me explican en español, pero está bien porque mi nivel de comprensión del inglés no es tan bajo que no pueda entender sus explicaciones.*

Yes, there are times when they don't explain to me in Spanish, but it's okay because my level of understanding English is not that low that I cannot understand their explanations.

[2] p. 14.

Reynosa Schools vs. U.S. Schools and Inequalities. Data comparing Reynosa schools versus U.S. schools revealed several differences such as structural inequalities of school buildings, professionalism with school staff, and access to technology. Participants found more benefits attending U.S. schools. The literature to support this finding was supported with CRT, referring to the tenets of permanence of racism and intersectionality, referencing Jupp, Regina Berry, Mogush, Mason (2018), Ladson Billings & Tate (1995) and Delgado & Stefancic (2001). Also, literature on LatCrit referring to immigrants' transnational experiences, referencing Valdes (2005) and Romero (2008). The following are some explanations from participants describing school inequalities in Reynosa versus U.S. schools.

Gerardo: Over there we don't use computers and stuff. We used to have everything on paper and books. [2] p. 4

Gerardo: Here everything has to be online and you have to switch classrooms and move from one classroom to another. [2] p. 4

Gerardo: It was almost the same as here. It was just that the classrooms were not in a building. The classrooms were little rooms stuck together but not in a building. When you got out of the classroom there is the outside. There was no air conditioning only the outside air. [2] p. 5

Leticia: *El problema en México era que si el maestro no podía asistir a clase ese día, el aula quedaría sin supervisión y solo los estudiantes quedarían solos. Había mucho caos, desorden. No hubo orden. Por lo tanto, esta persona no siempre podía supervisarnos porque estaba ocupada haciendo otras cosas. Por lo tanto, hubo mucha desorganización.*

The problem in Mexico was if the teacher was unable to attend class that day, the classroom would be left unsupervised with only students left alone. There was a lot of chaos. There was no order. Therefore, there was a lot of disorganization. [2] p. 13

Participation in Classes and Extra Curriculars, Narrow Evidence of Participation.

Regarding examples shared by students of what participation looks like for them in the classroom, responses consisted of “Yes, they involve me”, “Yes, I participate”, “Yes, they include me”, however students were not able to elaborate on the exact involvement of their participation. Drawing from the LatCrit framework, referencing Perez Huber, 2010) on topics of intersectionality, race, immigration and language. Also, literature on Subtractive Schooling, referring to subtractive assimilationist policies and practices, referencing Valenzuela (1999). The following examples are described by participant about their participation in their classes.

Do you feel that the teachers are assisting you with what you need in the classroom at South Texas Middle School? [2] p. 11

Beto: *Bueno sí, ellos me ayudan.*

Well yes, they do help me. [2] p. 11

Beto: *No, no en educación física. No, not in P.E. [2] p. 10*

Beto: *No sé cómo entrar en una clase de educación física.*

I don't know how to get into a P. E. class. [2] p. 11

Leticia: *Mi profesor de Arte simplemente notificó a los estudiantes y les proporcionó información sobre la actividad, pero no entendí de todo porque todo estaba en inglés y no estoy acostumbrado a recibir información y a trabajar en las cosas de forma independiente, pero estoy trabajando en esta. Por lo tanto, no entendí muy bien la actividad y no pude participar, pero la encontré interesante.*

My Art teacher simply notified the students and provided them with information over the activity, but I didn't quite understand because everything was in English and I am not accustomed to receiving information and for me to work on things independently, but I am working on this. Therefore, I didn't understand the activity too well and didn't get to participate, but I found it interesting.

Life in Reynosa vs. Life in the U.S. Escaping Poverty, Crime and Insecurities *en el otro lado.* This finding relates to the difference's participants shared about their life in Reynosa versus their life in the U.S. Prevailing reasons for coming to the U.S. consisted of crime, poverty and to live a "better" life in the U.S. Although there are dangers involved in border crossing, participants saw the importance of studying in the U.S. as reason to come to *el otro lado*. Referencing on literature from the border, citing from Anzaldúa (1987) and Taibo (2002). Also, the LatCrit framework, citing Perez Huber (2009) on examining the experiences of Latina/o students, including literature about experiences of schooling for Mexican immigrant students citing from Valenzuela (1999).

Carmen: *Lo que es diferente es la gente, el país. Aquí es menos peligroso.*

What is different are the people, the country. Here it is less dangerous. [1] p. 18.

Beto's Mom: *Aquí es diferente. No es que allá hay una tienda a la vuelta de la esquina. Los lugares están más cerca y no aquí. Allá hay más violencia. Mis hijos son varones y tienen que salir a trabajar o por el motivo que sea. Entonces, es una vida mejor aquí para ellos.*

Here it is different. It is not like over there that around the corner is a store. Places are closer and not here. Over there, there is more violence. My boys are male and they have to go out to work or whatever reason. So, it's a better life here for them. [P] p. 34.

Leticia's Mom: *Aparte de eso, tenemos que estar pagando y pagando y soltando dinero. Además, y el salario que ganamos allí no se extiende y no podemos llegar a fin de mes.*

Aside that we have to be paying and paying and letting go of money. Also, and the salary we earn over there doesn't stretch and we can't make ends meet. [P] p. 37.

Implications for Educators at South Texas Middle School

Based on the data context, some implications for educators at South Texas Middle School are as follows: Preoccupation with English Language and Participation in Classes and Extra Curriculars since these findings directly impact student instruction. Responses from student participants emphasized learning the English language as an expectation and a sense of belonging in school. Parents focused on their children learning to acquire the English language as a prioritizing reason for wanting to bring them to the U.S. There is no evidence of Spanish as an academic language at South Texas Middle School. Also, participation in classes and extra curriculars according to students' responses indicated very narrow evidence of what participation looked like for them.

Implications re: Preoccupation with English Language. Although teachers provide ESL supports with Spanish translations, these translations do not offer any academic learning in Spanish. The expectation remains that students understand the English content through the ESL supports. In more specific terms, students that are Spanish-dominant at South Texas Middle School are provided with ESL supports as a pull-out program, however their efforts focus on developing basic, conversational skills in English. Students should be provided with opportunities for dual instruction at the secondary schools to develop high levels of language proficiency and literacy in both program languages. Immigrant students face inordinate challenges to succeed. Rather than as a strength to build on, their fluency in Spanish is construed as a “barrier” that needs to be overcome (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 262).

Implications re: Participation in Classes and Extra Curriculars. From looking at the data, evidence suggests that immigrant students demonstrated narrow evidence of participation in the classrooms. Some prevalent phrases provided by students such as, “Yes they involve me.” “They treat me the same as the other students”. Immigrant students perceive the equality in treatment of all students as being “included” in the classroom. There is however, very narrow evidence of what this inclusion looks like in the classroom. The literature on Subtractive Schooling on the topic of “subtractive assimilation”, is predicated on the assumption that assimilation is a non-neutral process and that its widespread application negatively impacts the economic and political integration of minorities (Cummings, 1984, 1986, Gibson, 1993, Valenzuela, 1999). Students should be provided with genuine opportunities to participate that go beyond equal treatment in the classroom.

Reflecting on the Research

Immigrant students from this study for the most part appeared to be content with their educational experiences at South Texas Middle School. Most comments by the students were brief and usually positive about their experiences in U.S. schools. When observed in a school setting, my observations of them were otherwise. Students were lost in the hallways when there was a change in their routine. Students relied on their observations of what everyone else was doing to keep up. In the classroom students had equal treatment. They were all seated in desks, they participated with required assignments and activities. Immigrant students are good with keeping appearances of following along with what everyone else is doing. The reality is that they are on their own. Although teachers do make efforts to ask the students if they have any questions and do at times provide explanations in Spanish, the majority of times checking for understanding consists of having the students nod or gesture that they understand. Although students do have access to bilingual dictionaries and translations do take place in the classrooms by the teacher and peers, they do not go beyond this. There are some ESL pull-out interventions that take place during the school day, these are done a couple times a week for half hour or so by a certified ESL teacher. For the most part all instruction in the classroom and ESL pull-out is English-dominant. All local and state assessments are done in English including language tests.

The overreaching message is that Spanish is a second-rate language and the emphasis is to learn English. As a school, not enough efforts to support the linguistic development of immigrant student's in Spanish is provided. In addition, immigrant students are falling short of opportunities to participate in their classes and extra curriculars. Immigrant students are hardly chosen to participate in activities outside of the classroom. They are usually not considered for Gifted and Talented selection, or Honor Society Organizations. Students who lack English skills tend to be a

part of intervention programs, such as afterschool tutoring, ESL computer pull-out sessions, and language camps from Bilingual programs. Although immigrant students are the first to be considered for remedial purposes, they tend to be excluded from more higher achieving academic programs. On a more positive note, teachers do have good comments to share about recent immigrants in their classrooms and the progress they are making with learning and participation. Parents share their gratitude and appreciation for the opportunities their children have while attending school at South Texas. For the most part, their gratitude is for the attention their children are given while attending school and the resources, such as access to technology their children are provided.

Conclusions and Closing Remarks

The social fiction story above helps to portray the complexity of the lived experience of an immigrant student at South Texas Middle School. This story serves to build critical consciousness and awareness to show what the life of an immigrant student attending U.S. schools faces. In considering the literatures and data presented in the chapters, the following frameworks were key in supporting the findings detailed in chapter four, Subtractive Schooling, CRT, LatCrit, Funds of Knowledge frameworks and border literature. In closing, immigrant students attending U.S. schools face issues of racism in overt ways such as lack of instructional supports in Spanish, where schools privilege English and participation in their classes and extracurriculars are limited. Spanish is regarded as a second-rate language and the emphasis is to learn English. Students and parents mention their experiences attending South Texas Middle School are positive and are gracious for the school's efforts to provide immigrant students with resources for technology, professionalism, and English instruction. These efforts should go beyond the classroom and students should be provided with genuine opportunities to participate in all school related

functions and programs and spoken to in their native language Spanish. By creating opportunities for success by providing students with curriculum that is rooted in Spanish to support the English, affording immigrant students genuine inclusive practices in school, that go beyond ESL supports or remediation programs, students can be provided with the same chance everyone else gets. By no means does this mean to lower the standards for learning for non-English speaking students, on the contrary, offering opportunities that challenge them in Spanish first to build on the English would help to enhance their skills in different content areas. This includes opportunities for extracurricular events and activities.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jessica Marie Gonzalez graduated high school from a small town in south Texas, La Joya Independent School District in 1996. She graduated in the top ten percent of her class. Jessica attended the University of Texas Pan-American, earning a Bachelor's Degree in Rehabilitative Services in 2002 after six years, and a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling in 2006 after two years. She continued her education and earned a Principal's certificate in Educational Leadership from the University of Texas Pan-American in 2008, after two years. In 2017 she began her doctorate studies and earned a doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in May 2022, after five years. Her permanent mailing address is 602 Pink Bugambilia Pharr, Texas 78577. Jessica's experiences have consisted of working with The Women's Program at the South Texas Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Rio Grande City, Texas in 2001-2002. She then pursued a teaching certification and started her teaching career as a Special Education Teacher from 2002-2010 where she worked with elementary and middle school-aged students. Jessica then continued as a middle school administrator in 2010 until present time.