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Mi Familia es Mi Fuerza

Yvonne Borkowski

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Education

Molloy University

2022

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2022



**MOLLOY
UNIVERSITY**

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES

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November 9, 2022

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Abstract

Latinx parents have been unfairly blamed for their child's negative educational outcomes due to how they choose to be involved in their child's education. School expectations of parent involvement typically follow the Epstein Model, which is aligned with traditional, White, middle-class involvement such as fundraising and bake sales. Meanwhile, Latinx, low-income parents often perceive their involvement as shaping their child's behavior at home and teaching them about moral values. This qualitative case study examines how five Latinx parents in a predominantly Latinx school district on Long Island defined school-based and home-based parent involvement, advocated for their children, as well as how their involvement practices in schools aligned with the Epstein model and how they differed. First, findings showed that Latinx parents defined school-based and home-based parent involvement in different terms, depending on language and experience with the U.S. education system. The Spanish-dominant parents characterized *parent involvement* as being present at home, raising their children to be responsible and well mannered, and to oversee that homework was completed. Bilingual mothers took a more active approach to ensure that homework was completed accurately, that their children attended all their extracurricular activities, and their children were held accountable for their actions. Participating at PTA meetings and being visible at the school came easier for bilingual parents. Second, Latinx parents advocated for their child in issues related to discipline, bullying, or receiving services. The Spanish-dominant mothers found it difficult to navigate the school system because of communication barriers due to a lack of Spanish-speaking staff. It is important for schools to reconsider

the Epstein Model that often reinforces negative perceptions of the types of parent involvement common across Latinx families. Educators must recognize, cultivate, and empower the strength of Latinx parents through intentional family–school partnerships that are culturally responsive.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Often, parents are unfairly blamed for their child's negative educational outcomes due to how they choose to be involved in their child's education (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). As an educator and daughter of a Latina mother, I have witnessed the inequities and lack of opportunities that many parents face when attempting to participate in their child's education. School expectations of parent-involvement activities follow traditional, White, middle-class involvement practices (Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008). This group of parents typically attends parent-teacher conferences, volunteers at school, and assists their child with homework. Also, White, middle-class parents are more likely to advocate for school-based policy decisions, volunteer for committees, and bake for the back-to-school night (Henderson et al., 2002). Meanwhile, less dominant groups, such as Latinx, low-income parents, often perceive their involvement as shaping their child's behavior at home and teaching them about moral values (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1995). Research has shown that Latinx parents are typically less likely to participate in White, middle-class parental-involvement activities at school (Araque et al., 2017). Less research has examined how and when Latinx parents become involved in their child's education at school, what barriers they encounter, and how the school or teacher responds to their advocacy efforts (Marcon, 1999). Therefore, the purpose of this case study was to fill this gap by understanding why and how Latinx parents become involved in their child's school.

Research Problem

There have been many interpretations and definitions of *parent involvement*, yet some include a host of complicated meanings (Reyes et al., 1999), making it difficult to define accurately. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, a U.S. federal statute, defined *parental involvement* as

the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including assisting their child's learning; being actively involved in their child's education at school; serving as full partners in their child's education and is included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child. (No Child Left Behind Act of 2021, 2002)

Meanwhile, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012) defined *parent involvement* as parents and schools working together to support and improve students' learning, development, and health. The National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (n.d.) defined *parent engagement* as a shared responsibility to actively support children's learning and development.

All these definitions reflect a shared responsibility between educators and parents supporting children's learning. However, they are broad and do not capture the different ways parents from different racial and socio-economic backgrounds demonstrate their involvement at home or school. The lack of consensus on how to define *parent involvement* can add to low expectations of parents, demoralization among educators, and inefficient use of government funds designed to engage and improve parent engagement (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). While these are conceptually broad terms of parent

involvement, they provide little guidance for designing or evaluating effective culturally relevant parent-involvement activities geared toward Latinx families.

Culture develops in the home, so understanding the connection between home and school is valuable. Fine (1993) stated that authentic parental involvement requires a three-way commitment to organizing parents and restructuring schools and their communities toward enriched educational and economic outcomes and inventing rich visions of educational democracies. In a study by Ingram et al. (2007), families from culturally diverse backgrounds defined “meaningful involvement in the home” as “someone who works with the teacher and continues learning activities at home” (p. 488).

Nieto (1987) argued that the widely used definition of *parent involvement* disregards the different perceptions from diverse families on parent involvement and their views on their child’s education. Lopez et al. (2001) sought to expand the meaning of *parental involvement*, especially those of culturally diverse parents. This redefinition calls for redeveloping parent programs and coordinating services for families (Lopez et al., 2001), since parental involvement is considered a critical aspect of education. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) recognized that when school administrators, staff, and teachers have a better understanding of their students’ cultures or families’ parenting practices, they could fully develop collaborative tools to bridge school and home activities.

Latinx Parental Involvement in Schools

The U.S. term *education* generally focuses on academics, but a study by Goldenberg and Gallimore (1995) found that Latinx parents’ definitions of *education* (or

educación) differed from the U.S. term. For example, Latinx parents did not focus entirely on academics. Instead, they saw morality, proper behavior, good manners, and respect for elders as part of the definition.

The Latinx concept of *educación* holds parents responsible for moral education, while the school is responsible for academic education. In this view of education, if parents are meddling in the school environment, it is seen as a form of disrespect. Conversely, in American culture, school engagement consists of reinforcing education at home (helping with homework, providing resource materials), coupled with active in-person school participation, which all are highly regarded and appropriate. Durand (2010) suggested that these values anchor the parent–child relationship in a context of closeness, where raising a child that is well mannered and respectful of authority figures is highly regarded.

Barriers to Parental Involvement

According to Robles (2011), it is unfortunate that many Latinx parents tend to shy away from becoming involved in schools. Although Latinx families want to raise successful children, these parents face sociocultural barriers that prevent them from fully participating in their child’s school (Tang, 2015). Cotton and Wikelund (1989) suggested there are many reasons for their hesitation, such as language barriers and low self-esteem, since some cannot read or comprehend complicated forms and thus are unable to help their child with homework. These issues may form a sense of helplessness and embarrassment (Quezada et al., 2003).

Teachers and school personnel’s attitudes toward families can also be a possible barrier to levels of involvement (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). While some educators viewed

Latinx families as disengaged, Cotton and Wiklund (1989) noted that Latinx parents have reported that it was the failure of school personnel for not sending correspondence in their native language, making it difficult for them to become involved. These informational items include letters, school calendars, lunch menus, and informational pamphlets, which cause confusion for not only the children but also for their parents. Smith et al. (2008) found an example of this confusion where children would show up at school on professional development days meant for teachers and not for students to be in school. These authors also noted that since the Latinx parents were not fluent in English, they faced barriers in communicating with the school effectively. In turn, the children become the interpreter for their parents to become involved.

Framework

There are several parent-involvement models capturing the different ways parents demonstrate their involvement in their children's school. However, the Epstein Model of Six Types of Parent Involvement (1995) has been widely used by schools across the United States. This framework has broken down specific responsibilities' schools should involve families on: supporting parenting, ensuring bidirectional communication, volunteering (i.e., recruiting parents' help and support), decision making (including parents in school-centered decisions and supporting parent leaders and representatives), and collaborating with the community. Epstein's Model has shown to be beneficial, where it embraces the traditional definitions of *parental involvement* and celebrates the role of parents in the home, ensuring homework completion, and providing opportunities for educational activities to be supported (Epstein et al., 2001). Furthermore, Epstein's Model recognizes that collaboration between parents and schools is essential and

encourages schools to plan for parents to be stakeholders within the school through shared decision-making teams.

Epstein's six types of parent-school partnerships focus mostly on the school's role in fostering these relationships: (a) parenting, where schools help families provide home-based support for learning; (b) communicating in effective school-home communication about school offerings and progress; (c) volunteering opportunities for recruiting and organizing parents to support school mission and child development; (d) learning at home by providing information to families to help students at home; (e) decision making to include parents in school-based decision making and developing parent leaders; and (f) collaborating with the community to integrate community resources and services to strengthen school programs to enhance family practices and student development. This model has well-defined and useful guidelines for creating corresponding activities of parent behaviors. However, they simply measure teacher and school-initiated programs rather than parent-initiated involvement. Ferlazzo (2011) stated that there is an emphasis on telling families how they can be involved in the school, rather than soliciting input from parents and asking for their suggestions.

Research Purpose

This topic is being researched for several reasons. As a former bilingual community outreach specialist working on Long Island, I have encouraged Latinx parents to participate in their children's school and for schools to bridge relationships between families and schools. It became apparent over the years that schools minimized Latinx involvement practices at home as not engaging enough since the Latinx parents were not as visibly present in the schools as the White parents. Despite the schools' efforts to

include all families and use the strategies from the Epstein Model, they continued to view this framework as a capstone model to encourage Latinx parent involvement, since it is the norm in Long Island schools that have predominantly White middle-class families. However, as demographics change on Long Island to include more Latinx families, schools must reconsider the Epstein Model because of its Eurocentric philosophy and goals. I chose the Epstein Model to explore its implementation with Latinx families since most Latinx parents did not participate in the schools I serviced.

As a Latina born to a Puerto Rican mother who is a native Spanish speaker and an American father who was bilingual, I had diverse parental-involvement experiences while growing up. My parents each took a different approach to my education. My father participated in all my academics, where he would review my homework, study with me for tests, challenge my thinking, and encourage the importance of a good education. My mother emphasized maturity, self-respect, advocating for myself, and being responsible and independent. All while instilling these values, my mother advocated for me when I was bullied at school or when I had an issue in a class. My upbringing influenced many of my educational and professional choices, even though it did not mirror exactly the research I found. While there is significant quantitative research on parental involvement, additional qualitative case study research is needed to provide a voice to Latinx parents' perceptions of cultural, social, and institutional factors that contribute to their level and type of involvement.

Since the definition of *parent involvement* is different across research and is limited among the Latinx bilingual and Spanish-dominant families, it is important to reconsider conventional ways of parent involvement that often reinforce inequalities of

parent involvement across Latinx families. There has been a lack of understanding about how Spanish-speaking and bilingual Latinx parents perceive parent involvement and how perceptions of their parental role influence Latinx parent advocacy. Without Latinx parental involvement and advocacy, Latinx students might not optimize their academic achievements. More qualitative studies on what motivates Latinx parent involvement are needed to understand what Latinx parent involvement means to them and the support they need from the schools to become involved (Altschul, 2011). Furthermore, qualitative studies can shed insight on understanding Latinx parent experiences while advocating for their children. This qualitative case study fills the gap by illuminating why and how Latinx bilingual and Spanish-dominant parents become involved in their child's education.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do Latinx parents define school-based and home-based parent involvement, and how do those understandings differ between bilingual versus Spanish-dominant parents?
 - a) How do Latinx parents advocate for their children, and what barriers do they face in the school?
 - b) In what ways are Latinx parents' involvement practices in schools aligned with Epstein's Model, and how do they differ?
 - c) Is Epstein's Model appropriate to use in schools with Latinx families?

Definition of Key Terms

Barriers to parental involvement: Any internal or external psychological, emotional, physical, social, cultural, or environmental factor that impedes and/or reduces parental-involvement abilities (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Educación: Distinct from formal academic educational activities, this is typically seen as the job of the teachers. For Latinx parents, *educación* refers to respectful behavior, good manners, and moral values they instill in their children as the basis for academic learning and for the *buen camino* [right path] in life (Delgado-Gaitan, 2004; Valdés, 1996).

Joyce Epstein's Six Types of Parent Involvement: This framework enables educators to develop effective programs designed to bring school, family, and community together in a positive manner. The six types of parent involvement are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, making decisions, and collaborating with the community.

Latino: A Latino/a or Hispanic person can be any race or color. This refers to a person's origin and ancestry born in or with ancestors from Latin America and living in the US.

Latinx: The term *Latinx* is not a race but refers to Latin American heritage. This term is used as a gender-neutral alternative to Latino or Latina. The term Latinx is used throughout this study.

Parent Involvement: Parent involvement includes parents' interest in their child's education at home and at school (Marshall & Jackman, 2015). In addition, the term *parental involvement*, under No Child Left Behind (2002), has been defined as the

participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities.

Conclusion

There have been countless studies on Latinx student achievement and parent involvement that examined pedagogical approaches, teacher perceptions, and cultural differences (Freeman & Freeman, 2002). However, educators do not always consider the culturally different involvement practices that parents from diverse backgrounds practice or the cultural or linguistic-based barriers that may limit parent involvement. These unfortunate findings have underestimated Latinx parents' commitment to their child's education and their desire to connect with their schools in a more profound way. Therefore, this qualitative study was designed to better understand Latinx parent involvement and advocacy efforts. In the following two chapters, supporting research of parent involvement and barriers to Latinx parent involvement activities is described. In addition, research design is provided.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Latinx parent involvement has been more widely studied over the past decade. This chapter presents the review of literature that supports this research study. I discuss the definitions of parent involvement; the theoretical framework of Joyce Epstein's Six Types of Parent Involvement; social and cultural attributes, motivators, and barriers to parent involvement; and educator and Latinx perceptions of parent involvement.

The purpose of this literature review is to investigate Latinx perceptions of parent involvement and the value of parent involvement in their child's school. As the primary researcher, I attempted to answer the following questions: How does Latinx parent perception differ from school expectations? What is parental involvement? What types of involvement are Latinx parents engaged in, and why? What are the factors that motivate and prevent parental involvement efforts by Latinx parents?

This study sought to legitimize the voices of Latinx parents and show how their beliefs are driven by their culture, respective histories with school expectations, and their engagement with their child's school.

Definition of Parent Involvement

The traditional definition of *parental involvement* includes activities in the school and at home. This definition can make it difficult to identify the practices of parent involvement. Clark (1983) offered clarity to the meaning that parent involvement was composed of "distinctive parent-child interactions"—specifically assisting children with their homework, having expectations of school performance, and supporting children

emotionally at home. Deslandes and Bertrand (2005) suggested parental involvement can take many forms, including volunteering at the school, communicating with teachers, assisting with homework, and attending school events such as performances or parent–teacher conferences. However, Simoni and Adelman (1993) argued that viewed through this lens, African American and Latinx families demonstrate low rates of parental involvement. Parent involvement can also include monitoring, supporting, and advocating to ensure that they have every opportunity for success and increase the likelihood of that child excelling in school, receiving higher grades, and attending college in the future.

Henderson et al. (2002) found in several studies that families of all education levels, income levels, ethnic and cultural groups, are engaged in supporting their children’s learning at home. However, White, middle-class families tend to be more involved at school. According to Rothstein-Fisch and Trumbull (2008), if educators illuminate children’s culture from home into the school, they can draw upon their unique strengths brought by their powerful familial influence of culture. Students’ behaviors and beliefs that shape them often result from their families, where group interdependence begins and is dominant.

Past studies provide important insights on Latinx parents cultural beliefs about how education and their cultural beliefs influence educational outcomes. However, few studies capture parent practices in Latinx culture and its impact on family and school partnerships. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) found that schools often expect parent involvement to match traditional White-normed practices. As Gollnick et al. (2009) pointed out, when schools are prepared for diversity and appreciate the cultural patterns

by a new group, this will allow families to create ways for sharing their culture with the schools. When schools begin to understand cultural values from their immigrant families, they will experience a partnership from families to participate in activities where their culture is respected and recognized.

When immigrant families feel important and supported by the school, they are more likely to work together with the school. Valdés (1996) referred to this collaborative involvement by keeping parents informed, knowledgeable, and capable of choosing ways to be involved in their children's schools and education, congruent with their culture and values. Learning from parents about their perceptions of parental involvement can be done through different frameworks that help build understanding of many cultures' characteristics. This study utilized Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement (1995) as the model for connecting schools with families.

Theoretical Framework

Promoting parent involvement can encourage and assist parents and families to become more involved in their children's education. Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement is intended to support the development and implementation of a systemic approach to partnerships—ideally, one that cultivates a culture of partnerships throughout a district or school. This study used Epstein's (1995) theoretical framework to highlight why schools need to reimagine traditional forms of parent involvement in children's learning to build stronger home-school partnerships. This research focused on nontraditional forms of parent involvement found in Latinx families; therefore, the goal of this research was to add new, culturally relevant dimensions to Epstein's framework.

Joyce Epstein's *Six Types of Parent Involvement*

The complete technical name of Epstein's framework is the "Framework of Six Types of Involvement for Comprehensive Programs of Partnership and Sample Practices." Epstein's (1995) six types of family involvement framework include a variety of partnership components: supporting parenting, ensuring bidirectional communication, volunteering (e.g., recruiting parents' help and support), decision making (e.g., including parents in school-centered decisions and supporting parent leaders and representatives), and collaborating with the community. Each type of involvement is a partnership between the home and school, where the partnership is developed collaboratively and not solely determined by a school. Epstein and Sheldon (2002) suggested implementing the research-based framework of six types of involvement through these practices. Epstein explained that each type of involvement includes many different practices of partnership aimed at what schools should do to enhance parental involvement. These components are described as how parent involvement can be implemented in school programs across each of the six types.

Parenting

This first type of involvement occurs when family customs and home life support "children as students" (Epstein, 1995) and when schools understand their students' families. Through parenting, schools can prepare parents to set goals for their children and understand families' backgrounds. Epstein and Sheldon (2002) suggested that schools can help families to develop positive environments at home to support their child

through parent education classes, teachers visit families at home, or hold parent workshops on topics of interest to the families.

Communicating

This second type of involvement occurs when educators, students, and families utilize effective forms of home-to-school and school-to-home communications. Henderson et al. (2007) shared important ways for schools and parents to work together and increase communication, such as teacher training to build partnerships with parents as collaborators in the education of their children. Huang and Mason (2008) shared that parents take pleasure in hearing about how their child is doing in school and school happenings. Schools that are designing effective modes of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs provide opportunities for two-way communication. Some can accomplish this by meeting with parents for parent conferences and offering translators and translations (when needed) for written and verbal communication. Schools can also hold monthly coffees, socials, and other activities for families and teachers to meet informally. Using forms of communication as possible methods of open and clear communication are worthy endeavors.

Volunteering

Volunteering is the third type of involvement where educators, students, and families solicit and organize parent help for student activities. Volunteering is one of the most common forms of involvement. Recruiting and organizing parent help and support programs in the schools is a means of volunteering, however challenging it is. Henderson et al. (2007) mentioned, “Although this is a good way to see what the student is learning many parents do not feel confident taking on this task” (p. 90). By inviting parents to

serve as class parents, members on school committees, or school monitors, schools can encourage parents to participate.

Learning at Home

Learning at home is the fourth type of involvement that occurs when information and ideas are given to educate families about how they can assist their children at home with homework and other class-related activities. Henderson et al. (2007) suggested that schools can provide training, workshops, and tips for parents published in a newsletter. In addition, offering families information about the skills addressed in classrooms can help with parent participation.

Decision Making

Including parents in school decisions and developing parent leaders is the fifth type of involvement. Schools can include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives by encouraging families to participate in PTA meetings as well as informing families about the school board, its members, and voting opportunities. Henderson et al. (2007) argued that “schools should provide workable mechanisms for teachers, parents, and students to voice their ideas and concerns, and to take part in decision making” (p. 187). Even inviting family members to serve on committees that review school improvement plans can offer parents an opportunity to participate in school decision-making activities.

Collaborating with the Community

Collaborating with the community is the sixth type of involvement. It is strengthened when community services, resources, and partners are melded into the educational process to broaden school programs and understand family practices.

Henderson et al. (2007) stated, “Schools are an important resource in any neighborhood” (p. 208). Identifying and integrating community resources and services can strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development. Epstein (1995) suggested that “the family, the school, and the community” (p. 2) influence a child’s growth and development. Collaboration can be increased by connecting families to information on community resources, holding workshops and parent meetings that focus on community health, and letting them know of social service agencies and other programs.

Given these proactive types of involvement, some have argued that Epstein’s approaches can foster individualistic and school-centric approaches (Warren, 2005). For example, Bower and Griffin (2011) explained,

Although researchers have studied and discussed parental involvement extensively in the literature and schools use models to implement parental involvement strategies, schools continue to struggle with increasing parental involvement with students of color and students of low socioeconomic statuses. (p. 77)

Lopez et al. (2001) found the Epstein Model to be problematic when school goals are developed on White and middle-class values and expectations. Barton et al. (2004) argued that these approaches often miss the various ways non-White middle-class parents participate in their children’s education because they do not align with the normative ways of parental involvement in schools. Through an understanding of Latinx parent perceptions of parent involvement, schools can encourage Latinx parents to become

involved at school and at home in ways that meet student and family needs through the implementation of these six types of involvement and beyond.

Each approach presents its own set of challenges that must be met to involve all families of some basic principles of involvement. Furthermore, Epstein stated that each type is likely to lead to different results for students, parents, teaching practices, and school climates. Going beyond baking a cake, volunteering as a class parent at school, or joining parent–teacher groups, there needs to be a better way to foster relationships developed between home and school to bridge the gap of Latinx parental involvement (Henderson et al., 2007).

Social and Cultural Attributes

There are several factors influencing the level of involvement of Latinx parents in their children’s school. In 2017, the U.S. Census Bureau (2020) identified that some 19.4% of Latinx live in poverty, compared to 13.4% for all Americans. This factor could impede Latinx families from becoming engaged in their child’s school. Data from the U.S. Census Bureau identified two factors contributing to the high poverty rate among Latinx are the group’s relatively low education and earnings levels. Farver et al. (2006) found that Latinx families from low-income households engage in fewer home-literacy activities compared to families from other ethnic groups. Immigrant, low-income Latinx parents often have rigid work schedules and face extreme economic hardships (Cooper et al., 2010).

Rowan-Kenyon et al. (2008) shared that parents of higher socio-economic status (SES) pay more attention to the educational progress of their children and have higher aspirations for college and future endeavors for their children than parents of lower SES.

However, teachers should not speculate that high SES parents desire more for their children than less educated, low SES parents. The challenges of poverty that affect Latinx communities are important for educators to understand, as they work to support, teach, and promote the success of Latinx students and their families that live in poverty.

Lopez et al. (2001) found that parental involvement in schools is strongly shaped by perceptions of parents' background and the roles they are expected to take by school administrators and teachers. Scanlan and Johnson (2015) pointed out that even with the best intentions to empower families from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, very often, middle-class families that mirror the school staff are the ones who tend to participate in school activities, leaving those families from low socio-economic backgrounds behind. According to Fine (1993), real parental involvement requires a commitment to organizing parents, restructuring schools and communities toward enriched educational and economic outcomes, and inventing rich visions of educational democracies of difference. Henderson et al. (2007) found that educators are hesitant to share their power with parents. Family–school relations are relations of power, and most Latinx families continue to feel powerless.

The U.S. public education system is complex to many immigrant families. Many of them who have attended school in a different country find themselves overwhelmed and lost when understanding the processes and functioning of the school system (Chakrabarty, 2017). Furthermore, it is critical for educators to understand the distinction between different races and ethnic groups in their past educational experiences when attempting to encourage more involvement (deBrey et al., 2019). Knowing these influences can help drive informed practices about the factors that influence parental

involvement. According to Rothstein-Fisch and Trumbull (2008), if we illuminate children's culture from home to school, it is possible to avoid pitfalls associated with categorizing students and instead draw upon their unique strengths brought by their powerful familial influence of culture.

Lareau and Weininger (2003) discussed how institutionally situated cultural dominance is related to the disconnect between school expectations of involvement and parents. They found that educators thought of good parents as reading to their children, attending school conferences, and volunteering at school; thus, they viewed middle-class parenting as inherently better than that of the working class. According to Croll (2004), since schools are essentially middle-class institutions, they tend to privilege and reward the cultural styles of the middle class over those of the working class.

Taking social and cultural attributes into consideration, coupled with the applicability of the Epstein model might offer schools new perspectives and information regarding Latinx parents' engagement in their children's education and the factors that prompt their engagement. The next section briefly describes the motivators and barriers to Latinx parental involvement.

Motivations to Parent Involvement

For decades, researchers have studied parent involvement and its benefits (Henderson et al., 2002). Over the past 20 years, research has studied parent involvement, which has included Latinx motivators for why parents choose to become involved or hesitate from becoming involved. For example, empirical work such as the Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) model of the parental-involvement process explained Latinx parents' involvement behaviors. Several findings have emerged from this model. First,

research found that many parents tend to be more involved in supporting their children's learning at home (helping with homework, discussing schoolwork and activities, affirming the value of education, or asserting positive expectations for the student's learning) than at school (attending parent-teacher conferences, visiting the classroom, volunteering, or helping with field trips; Anderson & Minke, 2007; Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005; Green et al., 2007). Second, predictors of parents' involvement are contextual motivators that include parents' perceptions that their child and their child's teachers value and invite their participation (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005).

In sum, research on motivation and involvement of Latinx parents show that they are more likely to be involved at home than at school. It is important to note, however, that this may be more so associated with personal barriers rather than lack of motivation. These barriers will be examined in greater detail later.

School Outreach

Research has shown that schools that make intentional efforts to reach out to families had more involvement overall. A study by Garcia Coll et al. (2002) found relatively strong efforts to reach out to parents (e.g., sending home information in Spanish, holding bilingual events at school, and providing Spanish-English bilingual education within the school) had more involved families. The Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) model suggested that major contextual motivators of involvement include general invitations from the school as well as specific invitations from teachers and students to involve parents.

Epstein et al. (2001) found that specific invitations to encourage parent involvement from the teacher may include requests to review homework, requests to help with particular assignments, and personal requests to visit the school or attend a school event. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2009) found that the power of specific teacher invitations to prompt school-based involvement is often grounded in positive, trusting relationships developed between teachers and families. DeGaetano (2007) saw that an increased level of parental involvement in school-based activities are linked to these types of teacher invitations. Guskey et al. (2007) claimed that communication between parents and teachers appears to lean on the efforts of their child's teachers or the student and their requests for involvement rather than on schoolwide procedures or practices.

In a caring school community, stakeholders work continually to improve the nature of these relationships. Valdés (1996) referred to this collaborative involvement by parents being informed, knowledgeable, and capable of choosing ways to be involved in their children's schools and education that are congruent with their culture and values.

Children's Educational Success

There has been research offering a positive view of certain groups of Latinx parents' involvement being more actively engaged with schools in supporting their children's educational success at home. Delgado-Gaitan (1992), for example, reported that parents of advanced first-grade readers versus parents of novice first-grade readers took an active role in communicating with teachers, often asking questions to help their children. In Trevino's (2004) study, the author explored Mexican migrant families of high-achieving secondary students and found that these parents considered themselves partners with their children's teachers and provided as much academic support,

particularly at home, as they could. They also reported regular involvement in several school-based activities, including parent–teacher conferences regarding their child’s academic performance; advocacy for their children’s needs; and an increase of attendance at schoolwide meetings, especially when schools offered translations in their language.

Henderson et al. (2007) emphasized that when all stakeholders work together, the results are rewarding: students’ grades, attendance, and discipline improve, and graduation rates are higher. In a meta-analysis conducted by Fan and Chen (2001), they found that parent involvement has a positive effect on student academic achievement and more students go onto post-secondary school. Elmore (1997) argued that while schools continue to measure student success on academic achievement, it must be coupled with a parallel-conceptualized involvement from all stakeholders involved with the student’s life. Gay (2002) stated that when students and their family’s culture, language, and life experiences are valued and integrated in learning, students can learn and communities can flourish.

Advocacy

Zarate (2007) found that when schools increase involvement initiatives focused on parent training and building leadership skills, parents can work better with the school and its staff. This helps Latinx parents become advocates for their children in schools and build community. Salas (2016) asserted, “If a parent were to possess the necessary cultural capital, they could advocate on behalf of their child to ensure that they were receiving quality teacher and counselor support” (p. 96). There needs to be a more concerted effort to develop committed leadership programs among Latinx parents. This is at the center of establishing meaningful partnerships between schools and parents

(Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017). Creating new leadership programs among Latinx parents is also an important element of successful school–family partnerships because it can provide a safe space for the development of Latinx parents’ voices and promote their participation in their child’s school (Jasis, 2021). This is typically the first opportunity for Native Spanish speakers to experience engagement in democratic participation, with opportunities to create impactful decision making for their children.

Trust

Henderson et al. (2007) argued that the issue facing many communities is how to forge a genuine trust between both parties needed to build home–school partnerships. Features of schools where parent engagement correlates with growth in student learning are building trusting, collaborative relationships with families and community members; recognizing and addressing families’ diverse needs; and sharing power and responsibility in authentic partnerships. Henderson et al. (2002) asserted that educators should use family-engagement strategies that are responsive to their families’ cultural and community backgrounds.

When administrators and teachers create a welcoming school environment and build meaningful relationships with families treating them as partners, parents will be prepared to understand today’s classrooms. When families feel important and supported by the school, they are more likely to work together with the school in supporting their child’s education. Without this support, parents are more likely to encounter difficulties with the educational system and unable to advocate for their children.

Barriers to Parental Involvement

Henderson et al. (2002) suggested that when families feel important and supported by the school, they are more likely to work together with the school in supporting their child's education. However, as Scanlan and Johnson (2015) emphasized, even with the best intentions to empower families from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, very often, middle-class families that mirror the school staff are the ones who tend to participate in school activities, leaving families of color behind. In the next section, I review the literature on the barriers to parental involvement, including socioeconomic status, trust, culture, school outreach, language, and varying perceptions of parent involvement from different educational stakeholders.

Socioeconomic Status

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2022), poverty rates in 2019 were the lowest ever observed for Hispanics (15.7%), compared to the prior low of 17.6% in 2018. Past research has found that parental involvement in schools can be especially daunting for parents whose primary language is Spanish and for those families struggling financially (Bower et al., 2011). Unfortunately, monolingual Spanish-speaking families may not have a complete understanding of how to navigate the school system or have the time to participate in school events. Schools often struggle to get all parents to be more involved in the school:

Although researchers have studied and discussed parental involvement extensively in the literature and schools use models to implement parental involvement strategies, schools continue to struggle with increasing parental

involvement with students of color and students of low socioeconomic statuses.

(Bower et al., 2011, p. 77)

Bryan and Henry (2012) found that parents of children understood the need for their involvement in their children's education but believed that they lacked the resources and knowledge to help their children. Henderson et al. (2007) noted that many poor uneducated immigrants understand the power of education and will do what they can to educate their child. Parents of diverse cultures may prefer to engage in familiar activities that are relatable. Because of barriers that some Latinx families experience when partnering with schools, there seems to be a need to help improve resources and eliminate barriers that might prevent Latinx parents from engaging more in their child's education.

Parents' perceptions of the time and energy they can bring to involvement may present challenges for lower-income Latinx families. These parents may have to contend with the stress of multiple jobs, demanding work schedules, and care for extended family (Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Pena, 2000; Weiss et al., 2003). Parental incomes can shape their views about organized activities at their child's school (Lin et al., 2018). Social class and income are factors that shape family ideas regarding benefits of organized activities at school (Lareau, 2011). Typically, low-income parents often work long hours or multiple jobs and must weigh the benefits and implications of taking time off work to participate in school events.

Culture

Henderson et al. (2007) described that diversity brings rich resources and opportunities to schools and communities, but it also can bring conflicts and misunderstandings. Careful consideration should be taken to avoid cultural assumptions

that push families away from schools. School leaders recognize how power is influenced with families and organizations beyond the schools' doors, and they seek ways to explore how their educational goals for students intersect with the interests and goals of cultural contributions. However, this remains a struggle.

Turner-Vorbeck and Marsh (2007) stated that parents from diverse backgrounds—especially immigrants—are often unaware of cultural educational differences from the US to their country. Scanlan and Johnson (2015) found that culturally responsive leaders support and recognize the cultural and linguistic competence of their families and community. This approach goes beyond a multicultural food event; it respects and values the contributions made by marginalized groups. Henderson et al. (2007) remarked that diverse children of different cultural backgrounds appear to do better when families and the school community collaborate to understand the different cultures and traditions. When seeking educational change to benefit students of color and their families, it involves building trust with families and school staff, mutual learning, professional development, and community immersion. According to Delpit (1995), if educators do not have some knowledge of their students' lives outside of paper-and-pencil work, and even outside of their classrooms, they cannot accurately know their students' strengths and weaknesses.

Rothstein-Fisch and Trumbull (2008) confirmed if we illuminate children's culture from home into the school, we can avoid pitfalls associated with categorizing students and instead draw upon their unique strengths brought by their powerful familial influence of culture. Taking Rothstein-Fisch and Trumbull's (2008) idea into

consideration, we should review the cultural influences and question the assumptions to avoid pushing students outside the parameters.

Language

Language is a significant challenge that deters immigrant parents from getting involved in their children's school. One of the most common barriers to parental involvement across numerous research studies is language (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008; Guzman et al., n.d.; Zarate, 2007). According to Zarate (2007), language was an insurmountable barrier to participation in their children's academic tasks and parents had mixed beliefs on whether they should engage with homework in light of their own limited formal education. Hispanic parents cannot effectively help their children with homework or easily communicate with school personnel if they are lacking English proficiency. Guzman et al. (n.d.) explained that this language barrier results in communication gaps between educators and Hispanic parents that can produce fear, shame, frustration, and intimidation in Hispanic parents, leaving them to feel disempowered to participate in any decision making affecting their children's education.

Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) asserted that Hispanic parents are often unfamiliar with the workings of the school system in the United States, which can create confusion and frustration with an educational system that not only misunderstands their culture, values, and beliefs, but also creates barriers that prevent Latinx parents' full involvement in their children's schooling. These feelings increase if the educators and school personnel do not speak their language and fail to provide translators and information in the parents' native language (Epstein et al., 1997; Good et al., 2010; Olivos & Mendoza, 2010). It is important that schools and educators consider how they

create barriers for parents and find ways to increase efforts to support Latinx parents in meaningful partnerships.

School Outreach

Epstein and Sheldon (2002) reported that a lack of home–school communication creates the perfect storm to negative home–school relationships. When schools make no effort to make parents feel welcomed, it makes it difficult for Latinx parents to become involved as parents, which often leave them feeling “uncomfortable, intimidated and unwanted in their children’s school” (Guzman et al., n.d., p. 9). Guzman et al. cited several studies in which Latinx parents also reported feeling ignored, disrespected, judged, and experienced discrimination. Epstein and Salinas (2004) explained that most schools conduct at least a few activities to involve families in their children’s education, but most do not have well-organized, goal-linked, and sustainable partnership programs.

Despite these barriers, many Latinx parents are actively involved in their children’s school, and many Latinx students are doing well in school. Several ethnographic studies (Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Gillanders & Jiménez, 2004; Reese, 2002) have suggested that most Latinx parents value education, hold high educational aspirations for their children, and believe that supporting their children’s education is very important. However, Trevino (2004) argued that the forms of involvement Latinx families choose may not be those desired or observed by schools and teachers in many communities.

In a study by Delgado-Gaitan (2004), she described her experiences with a group of Central American and Mexican working-class immigrant mothers who met regularly at their community library and discussed ways to become more involved at school. Through

their rich narratives, the women discussed their own life experiences, where resilience and strength emerged. Through these discussions, they were able to connect with their cultural histories and were empowered to find courage and strength in themselves. One attribute formed was how the women learned how to advocate for their children's needs in schools in new ways and how to collaborate on the resources available to them and their children. This sharing of information facilitated broader communication and information sharing to others in their own communities as well as with family members.

These external cultural factors and life circumstances such as work schedules, language barriers, lack of comfort with school procedures, and misunderstood cultural values all can influence involvement and are experienced by a majority of low-income Latinx parents (McWayne et al., 2016). Ideally, effective family partnerships in schools move beyond the traditional bake sale and PTA meetings. Epstein and Sheldon (2002) suggested that this purposeful process would engage school staff, families, and community members in respectful collaborations and shared responsibility where they can accomplish mutual goals and outcomes in a meaningful relationship. Through this collaborative effort, these stakeholders will have to be responsive to the varying perceptions of parent involvement from parents and educators.

Varying Perceptions of Parent Involvement

Another significant barrier to Latinx parental involvement is varying perceptions of what it means to be involved in schools, what counts as parent involvement, and what types of involvement are valued. Henderson et al. (2007) suggested, "Educators and parents have many beliefs, attitudes, and fears about each other that hinder their coming together to promote children's education" (p. 27). Russell and Granville (2005) explained

that parental involvement includes countless various activities that make up parent involvement, which are represented by formal and informal involvement: formal involvement refers to school-based activities, whereas informal involvement refers to home-based activities. The same perception may hold true for districts and states where they may disagree on the definition of parental involvement.

Educators' Perceptions

Pena (2000) believed that school administrators gain respect and appreciation for parents who are involved in the schooling of their children and, as a result, the teachers support parents. When administrators create a welcoming school environment and build meaningful relationships with families by treating them as partners, parents will be prepared to understand today's classrooms. Briscoe et al. (2003) explained that administrators who support families through meaningful partnerships can help those families develop stronger skill sets in understanding the educational framework. Creating these partnerships is the path that leads to all other family engagements.

Similarly, Gollnick and Chinn (2009) suggested that schools that understand cultural values from their immigrant families would have a welcoming process for families to participate in activities where their culture is respected and recognized. When immigrant families feel important and supported by the school, they are more likely to work together with the school in supporting their child's education. Although it could be challenging to learn about all the students' cultures, Gollnick and Chinn (2006) explained schools that are prepared for such diversity and appreciate the nature of acculturation, or the adoption of the dominant groups' cultural patterns will allow immigrant families to

create avenues for sharing their culture with the schools. The challenge for schools may very well be to create approaches that are appropriate for their situations.

Parents and educators may have differing views on what types of parent involvement qualifies as parental participation. Herrell (2011) found that parents' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement may be similar in ways but vary widely. Differences in levels of home-based and school-based involvement are of practical importance because school personnel often define involvement in school-based terms, which may lead them to underestimate the time minority parents spend on less immediately visible home-based activities (Jackson & Remillard, 2005). Elmore (1997) stated that while schools continue to measure student success on academic achievement, this must be coupled with a parallel-conceptualized involvement from all stakeholders involved with the student's life. Trivette et al. (1996) suggested giving families access to all school information and offering the support needed to enable them to address the educational needs of their child.

Latinx Parent Perceptions

Durand (2010) believed that culture influences parent beliefs, including how children should learn and develop. Parents of diverse cultures may prefer to engage in different types of activities. Because of barriers that some Latinx families experience when partnering with schools, there seems to be a need to expand the meaning of what parental school involvement means to those families. Zarate (2007) found that parents believed that monitoring their children's lives and providing moral guidance resulted in good classroom behavior, which in turn allowed for greater academic learning opportunities.

Turney and Kao (2009) explained that immigrant parents' beliefs about children's development are influenced by their experiences within their culture and could explain for low rates of traditional parent involvement in schools. Zarate's (2007) study found that Latinx parents mentioned life participation more frequently than academic involvement. In reviewing the literature on Latinx parenting, Halgunseth et al. (2006) noted that the Latinx parents adhere to the goals of *familismo*, *respeto*, and *educación* that drive parenting decisions and practices with children. *Familismo* refers to family closeness, cohesion, and the expectation of interdependence on family members. *Respeto* is the maintenance of interpersonal relationships through self and others. *Educación* is another Latinx child-rearing goal. The American term *education* holds mostly for academics, but in a study by Goldenberg and Gallimore (1995), Latinx parents' definitions of *education* or *educación* did not center solely on academics but included morals, appropriate behavior, good manners, and respect for elders. Durand (2010) suggested that these values anchor the parent-child relationship in a way where high value is placed on raising a child that is well mannered and respectful of authority figures.

López et al. (2001) found that the parents considered themselves as being highly involved in the educational lives of their children through teaching their children the value of hard work. His study showed how the immigrant families took their children at a young age to work with them in the fields and offered their children *consejos* (advice) as to the limited opportunities they will face if they do not graduate high school. These parents felt that through hard work, they will instill good work ethics in their children. It was apparent that attending PTA meetings or volunteering at school were not considered

parent-involvement practices by these migrant parents as the traditional methods that middle-class White families perceived.

Conclusion

While schools and families consider parental involvement or understand what parental roles should be, schools can consider important steps to ensure family participation. To leverage the playing field, Elmore (1997) stated,

Every increase in pressure on schools for accountability for student performance should be accompanied by an equal investment in increasing the knowledge and skills of teachers, administrators, students, and their families, for learning about how to meet these new expectations. (p. 37)

Furthermore, we cannot punish or hold teachers and families accountable if they have not been given the proper tools and training to effectively communicate.

Past studies provide important insights on what Latinx parents consider education and their cultural beliefs influencing educational outcomes. There is a plethora of literature that researches parent involvement as well as the way parents act as change agents and advocate on behalf of their children in schools. However, few studies capture parent practices in Latinx culture and the impact of rural Latinx family and school partnerships. When schools begin to understand cultural values from their immigrant families, they can experience a partnership from families to participate in activities where their culture is respected and recognized.

School reforms and policies for parent involvement have been traditionally centered on models or frameworks that focus on White middle-class families where two parents are present and have “traditional” types of parent involvement such as

parent/teacher conferences, volunteering, and fundraising (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Currently, efforts to increase Latinx parent involvement have not considered the cultural factors and perceptions held by Latinx parents that influence parental involvement for them. However, according to the National Education Association (n.d.), many schools throughout the US are implementing strategies to meet the unique needs of Latinx students and their families through cultural understanding and community outreach efforts.

According to this literature review, there were several factors that clarify Latinx perceptions of parental involvement: the perceptions about their responsibilities in the lives of their children, parent perceptions about how their involvement is viewed by the educators, and barriers that Latinx parents face in fully participating in their child's school. Since little is known about Latinx motivations and behaviors of parent involvement through the Joyce Epstein framework, this study aims to add to the available literature while proposing that the parent involvement models and frameworks that are widely used are not a one-size-fits-all solution.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Method

This chapter describes the research method used in this qualitative case study on Latinx parent involvement practices. As explained in Chapter 2, I drew on the theoretical framework of Epstein's (1995) Six Types of Parent Involvement and the extant literature on parental involvement among Latinx families to examine their perspectives on parent involvement. Although much is known about parent involvement of White middle-class families (Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008), there is a lack of empirical research on the alignment of Joyce Epstein's Six Types of Parent Involvement for Latinx families. Another missing piece is that schools and teachers typically value and reward White, middle-class family engagement activities and expect parents from other races, ethnicities, and social classes to do the same. Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) suggested that when school administrators, staff, and teachers have a better understanding of their students' cultures and their families' parenting practices, they can fully develop tools to bridge school-home collaboration to increase support for student learning. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to illuminate Latinx parents' perceptions of parent involvement in a particular place and time.

To fully capture the different meanings of Latinx parent involvement, it is essential to utilize a design that would promote dialogue via interviewing. A qualitative case study design was used to explore Latinx parents' advocacy experiences from their point of view and their perceptions of parent involvement. This qualitative method is appropriate because this study was conducted to explore the factors, obstacles, and parent practices concerning their involvement in their child's schools.

Although there are studies on Latinx parental involvement, they focus on the traditional, White middle-class involvement practices (Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008) and limited research that captures advocacy practices by Latinx parents. This study can contribute to the development of more effective Latinx parent-involvement strategies that can assist schools in understanding the factors that influence Latinx parents to become engaged in schools and address these gaps in the literature by developing a broader understanding of advocacy efforts posed by Latinx families.

Context

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2020), Latinx groups are the fastest-growing population in the United States. The Latinx population reached 62.1 million living in the United States. After non-Hispanic Whites, Latinx are the nation's second largest racial or ethnic group, making up approximately 19% of the total U.S. population. It is projected that in the next 20 years, "the number of Latinx children ages 5 to 13 will nearly double, and by 2030, Latinx students will comprise one-fourth of the total K-12 school population" (NCES, 2015, p. 41). Due to these swift changes to the demographics of their communities, school leaders will need to develop new ways to include more Latinx parents in the educational process, since schools currently struggle to adapt to the growing influx of Latinx students.

This case study was conducted in a White and predominantly Latinx community on Long Island, New York. The site selected for this study is "Philip and James College." I used this pseudonym to protect the privacy of the college and participants studied during this investigation. I selected this site since this college is in a school district that is currently 45% Hispanic and 44% White (New York State Education Department, 2019).

According to the NYSED data report card in 2001, this district was made up of 79% White students and 14% Latinx. The community experienced an increase of Latinx families over the last 20 years; however, the schools are still operating in White middle-class ways. Another reason I selected this site is Philip and James College hosts a Saturday literacy program for students in this community in need of additional literacy and language support. These students attend the school district zoned for this area and are predominantly from Latinx backgrounds. Their parents were required to drop off and pick up their children weekly from this program. Last, I work for Philip and James College as a coordinator, and I am familiar with the campus. These reasons supported the need to further investigate the findings for this case study.

Since the focus of this study was to document Latinx parents' perceptions about their school-involvement practices, a qualitative design was used. The case study explored the experience of five parents who were recruited from a Saturday literacy program. There was a purposeful selection of parents from Central and South American descent living in the zoned school district. Parents who participated in this study benefited by reflecting on their values and perceptions on parental involvement in schools.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

To capture parents' perceptions of parent involvement, a variety of data collection methods were used. Semi-structured questions captured their definitions and allowed for free-flowing conversations. Participants were welcome to use their language of preference throughout this study; however, Spanish was the primary language used. A

bilingual translator was utilized to identify any nuances or dialects in the transcript that I did not pick up on during the interview.

The interviews were held on Saturdays during the time the children were attending the literacy program. The interviews lasted approximately one hour or more at the college library. A private room in the library was used to ensure confidentiality. I was present at the Saturday literacy program weekly; however, there were some subsequent follow-up questions that required additional time. The significance of the interviews was to document Latinx parents' perceptions and definitions of parent involvement in their child's school.

At the completion of each interview, I reviewed all my notes and examined the participant's responses. These notes were used only for the relevancy of their responses. After each interview, I listened to the audio recordings from Rev.com. I jotted down notes of any emerging themes and corresponding phrases or quotes from the participants. The coding tool Dedoose was used to analyze participant responses. Once coded, patterns and trends that may have led to specific outcomes regarding Latinx parent-engagement experiences aided me to identify major themes found.

To ensure trustworthiness in this qualitative study, I engaged in using purposeful sampling, member checking, accurate data collection, data saturation, and self-reflection. Selecting parents from this region of Long Island was critical in learning more about Latinx parent involvement practices since the demographics of this area is primarily of Central and South American descent. To support the participant responses, member checking was offered to three parents so that an authentic interpretation of my notes and addressed any misunderstandings or corrections. The interview process was consistent

and offered participants the same opportunity to answer each question about their experiences. The line of questions also allowed for an in-depth conversation about their lived experiences and built a rapport with the researcher, thereby establishing trust.

During self-reflection on the data collection, it was important to identify my positionality and possible influences I might have brought to the study. A key component to qualitative research is the researcher's position and the participant's worldview. As a former bilingual outreach coordinator and a Latinx woman, I have a unique perspective being immersed in this culture that offers me an opportunity to build a relationship with the participants. Since I recognized these experiences, I made sure that it did not influence any biases toward the participants (Merriam, 2009).

This chapter explains the research design, the data collection, and analytic processes I chose for this case study. I highlight the basis for choosing a qualitative methodology as the best way to answer if the alignment of the Epstein Model is conducive for Latinx families by exploring their perceptions of parental involvement.

Research Purpose

As a former bilingual community outreach specialist, I have found some hesitation from Latinx parents to participate in their children's school (Robles, 2011) and schools overlooking Latinx involvement practices at home and school, even when using Epstein's Model (Epstein, 1995). Parent involvement in the Latinx community is low (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Forging successful parent involvement with Latinx families is essential, since there is limited understanding of how to better include Latinx families, why they become involved, and how to understand their preferences of involvement. This study explored Latinx parents' voices in where their beliefs guide their cultural

experiences, respective histories with school expectations, and their engagement with their child's school. Therefore, the purpose of this case study is to understand Latinx parents' perceptions of parent involvement in their child's school.

Research Questions

The following research questions were explored to better understand Latinx parent-involvement practices.

1. How do Latinx parents define school-based and home-based parent involvement, and how do those understandings differ between bilingual versus Spanish-dominant parents?
 - 1a) How do Latinx parents advocate for their children, and what barriers do they face in the school?
 - 1b) In what ways are Latinx parents' involvement practices in schools aligned with Epstein's model, and how do they differ?
 - 1c) Is Epstein's model appropriate to use in schools with Latinx families?

In the literature, there were several factors to help understand Latinx perceptions of parental involvement: the perceptions about their responsibilities in the lives of their children, parent perceptions about how educators include Latinx parents, and barriers that Latinx parents face in fully participating and advocating for their children in school. Since little was known about Latinx types of parent involvement through the Joyce Epstein framework, this study was designed to provide some of that missing information and consider that the parent-involvement models and frameworks widely used are not a one-size-fits-all model.

Rationale for a Qualitative Study

Worldviews are carefully taken into account when a research design is chosen (Merriam, 2009). A constructivist worldview seeks to find the meaning of a phenomenon from the individuals' perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To honor the true meaning of a whole phenomenon through the eyes of those who experience and live it, a qualitative approach helps bring personal values to this study. A constructivist worldview presupposes that "...individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). By using a qualitative research design for this study, it relies on the stories and words spoken by the participants related to their culture and shared behaviors. Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested that this type of study allows for exploring a deeper meaning of that particular group, which will allow for Latinx parents to share perceptions of their involvement in their child's school. Using this approach allowed this study to be more "innovative" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 20). These observations allowed me to gain more information; it is impossible to do it in a quantitative study, where a hypothesis is formed and formulas are used (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Merriam (2009) stated that qualitative research seeks to understand individuals or groups' experiences. This approach provides a way to explore how a particular group assigns itself to a social issue (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This can be done through open-ended and inductive questioning and observation in the individual's natural setting. The data collection can build from emergent to more generalized patterns or themes, where the researcher interprets and makes sense of its meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The participants' words are at the helm and the "researcher often is the

instrument” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 345). Here, the researcher is relying on their skills to gather information and reveal its meaning by using one of the three procedures: descriptive, exploratory, or explanatory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In addition, the researcher needs to evaluate their own worldview while interpreting the words of the Latinx participants to ensure that their perceptions of parent involvement are seen through different lenses. These lived experiences allowed for deep examination on how Latinx parents become engaged in schools, factors that influence their participation, and the ways they are involved. By utilizing a qualitative approach, the researcher can capture the participants’ words and can probe for better understandings, whereas a quantitative study measures numerical data and open-ended questions, which limits the vivid conversations that could be had with the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Rationale for Case Study

A qualitative case study examines a phenomenon in real time. A case study can analyze a single individual, group, or event while telling the stories of those individuals or groups of people (Suter, 2011). As Merriam (2009) stated, the case allows you to see it as a unit where there are clear distinctions where one can “fence in” what will be studied (p. 27). The case study design is particularly chosen because researchers are interested in interpretation rather than formulating a hypothesis. Case studies have special features that are thickly descriptive and illuminate the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). To achieve this, Latinx participants selected for this study provided their views that align with parent involvement. The selected Latinx families of Central and South American descent live in the community and have elementary-age children that attend the same school district. This was helpful to capture their experiences since their children are still in elementary

school and from the same background. By interviewing them, I was able to capture their words about parent involvement through a case study design to highlight their perspectives. Furthermore, case studies are more concrete and contextual. While the methods may be important, the questions being asked and their relationship to the results at the end make a case study unique (Merriam, 2009).

For this study, the data were collected through various means (interviews, focus group meetings, and observations at these meetings). This was helpful to triangulate the information and search for common themes. Using the case-study design, I was able to investigate the phenomenon more fully and provide an in-depth analysis of the findings, giving a voice to Latinx parents and their views.

Summary of Research Design

To fully capture the authentic meaning of Latinx parents' involvement, it was essential to utilize a design that would promote dialogue. Since a qualitative approach is inductive and flexible, a case study research design was used to understand how Latinx parents view their role of parent involvement. According to Yin (2009), "Case studies are an appropriate method when the researcher wants to understand how a phenomenon is taking place within a real-life context" (p. 2). Through this design, I elicited information about parents' perceptions in their own words using interview and observational methods in a natural way. Therefore, using in-depth interviews helped answer questions to further elaborate and enable me to explore Latinx parenting styles, school participation, and challenges and success of the educational system. This approach allowed Latinx parents to have in-depth conversations at a level where trust was established. This happened

through introductions and a research explanation to better understand the importance and impact of their participation.

Interviews included in this study were one-to-one interviews of five purposely selected Latinx parents that were 57 to 120 minutes in length and comprised of open-ended questions, followed by probing, when necessary, to process informant responses and better understand their perceptions of parent involvement. Seidman (2006) suggested that using in-depth interviewing allows the researcher to understand the lived experiences of individuals and the meaning ascribed to the experiences.

Research Setting and Sample

The research took place at the college campus of Philip and James College on Long Island, New York. Over the past 20 years, the population in this surrounding community has seen a significant increase of Latinx people move in compared to Whites. According to the New York State Education Department's (2019) Student Information Repository System demographic data, the student population in this area is 45% Hispanic and 44% White. The site was also selected because it provides a language and literacy service program to many elementary-age Latinx children who attend the local school district. The research site is accessible to where many of these families live, near major roadways and public transportation for parents to bring their child.

Participants

As of 2019, there were almost 61 million Hispanics living in the United States, making up 18.9% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The Latinx population has grown rapidly in the United States over the last decade and is expected to continue to grow. Between 2010 and 2020, the Hispanic or Latinx population in the U.S.

grew by 23%. The total U.S. population growth between 2010 and 2020 came from the Hispanic or Latinx population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). It is projected that the Latinx population will reach 111 million by 2060.

Five Latinx parent participants were selected for this study, and all had elementary-age children enrolled in the language and literacy service program at the local college. Families participating in the study were of Central and South American descent. There were 21 students enrolled in the literacy program. All the caregivers were given informational flyers on the first day of the program during parent orientation. Only five Latinx parents were willing to interview. Interestingly, there was higher interest from White parents; they were curious, expressed the importance of the studies, and voiced interest in being interviewed. However, since they did not fit the criteria, they could not participate.

Merriam (2009) stated that it is essential in any case study to carefully select participants. Parents recruited for this study were from the local college literacy program where their children attend the public schools from the district of location. Purposeful sampling was appropriate for this research design, since a small group of Latinx parents living in one school district can provide rich information on factors that influence Latinx parent involvement. Participants were invited to use their language of preference throughout this study. The primary language of this study conducted was in Spanish; however, two of the participants in this study were bilingual and preferred to speak in English. I did not need a translator for the interviews since I am also bilingual in Spanish and English. A translator was used for the transcriptions to decipher nuances. All

materials—including invitations, explanations, forms, and interviews—were offered in Spanish as well as English.

Researcher Positionality

As a reflective practitioner, I have been able to assess how my worldviews and positionality are valuable components of using a qualitative design. Aside from being the primary researcher, I was previously the bilingual educational specialist for an NYS Education Department–funded program for 12 years, conducting workshops for parents and professionals on various special education topics in English and Spanish. Also, I was a family and community engagement consultant for the My Brother’s Keeper initiative for five school districts on Long Island, in which one of my primary roles was to foster relationships with parents from high-needs communities to encourage parent-involvement activities. In July 2019, I left both positions and became the Coordinator of Student Teaching and Fieldwork placement at a local college, where I am also a lecturer in the Education Program. Currently, I supervise student teachers in their student-teaching placements across Long Island.

My interest researching Latinx parent involvement stems from my work as a bilingual education specialist and consultant on the My Brother’s Keeper initiative. Having hosted over several hundred seminars over 12 years using our guiding principles of the Epstein Model (1995), I could not help but to notice that not many Latinx parents were attending in high numbers like the White parents were. As I would review our data for the year, I noticed that Latinx parents were attending specific meetings, such as parent–teacher conferences or awards night, yet they tend to be ignored at the meetings and would not interact as much since most of the information being discussed was in

English. If a translator was present at these meetings, Latinx parents reported that the simultaneous translation became noisy and difficult to follow. Furthermore, those parents were seated in the back corners of the rooms where the translator would speak to the parents.

As a Latina myself, I had the opposite experience where my parents were engaged in my education despite my mother's native language being Spanish. My mother worked from home as a seamstress and always found time to attend parent-teacher conferences, assist with homework if she could understand it, and talk to me about the importance of going to school to one day graduate high school. My mother also would make some of my clothing and even made clothing for any school events or plays for other students. Conducting this study piqued my curiosity as to how Latinx parents perceive their roles in the home-school collaboration and whether knowing this could eliminate barriers preventing Latinx parents from engaging more in their child's education.

Data-Collection Procedures

The study process began in January 2022 at the commencement of the language and literacy Saturday program hosted by Philip and James College and lasted through April 2022. This program ran for 14 consecutive Saturdays. At the preliminary meeting where parents drop off their children at the literacy program, a discussion of the research goals were reviewed in English by the director of the program and information was disseminated in both English and Spanish.

I introduced myself to all the participants who were dropping off their children and explained about the existing research on Latinx parent involvement. Information was given about their participation and how it was voluntary. Volunteers at the initial meeting

were notified that they could stop the interview at any time, all their information would be kept confidential, and how I would be using name substitutions throughout the study. I explained that this was to ensure that the parents remain anonymous and how using codes would ensure privacy. I had the participants sign the IRB consent form for tape recording and gave them a copy of their transcription following the interview. To maintain confidentiality, I used pseudonyms for each of the participants and the college name.

After receiving permission from Molloy's IRB (see Appendix A), I conducted my research at the college library during the literacy program hours and/or on Zoom for the parents in Spanish and English. Hosting the interviews in both languages was a welcomed mode of communication. Since the library is an already familiar location and a room was reserved, this helped to ease the parents' nervousness and provided fewer distractions. As anticipated, childcare was not needed, since the parents did not bring other children. I was in close contact with the director of the literacy program to advise me of any closings due to snow and children being absent for illness.

A Spanish translator was available by phone for my call in the event I did not know or understand certain words in Spanish. I felt that having the bilingual translator on standby to assist me with troubleshooting any dialects and nuances I may encounter would be beneficial. I interviewed parents and had their answers transcribed in both English and Spanish. In addition, all responses were recorded on an audio-recording app with the participants' permission. Answers that were offered in Spanish were transcribed and then translated into English.

During the interviews, I allowed for open-ended, in-depth interviews that offered more informal dialogue to flow. This helped shed light into the challenges and strengths

of Latinx parents and school partnerships. Interview questions (see Appendix B) included the following topics: demographics, meaning of parent involvement, types of participation at their child's school, motivators, and barriers to participating at their child's school, and communication with the school. Individual interviews were conducted for approximately one or more hours per parent and for the focus group. The interviews with the Latinx parents were less formal where predetermined questions were asked and worded in a flexible manner. This allowed me to ask more follow-up questions to dig deeper and go to the root of concerns that might be of interest to the parent.

The interviews were recorded on the Voice App on my iPhone. I made notes immediately following each interview to capture and highlight topics that emerged and needed translations. The current study used naturalistic face-to-face structured interviews with four of the mothers. Three of the mothers were Spanish speaking and they all agreed to meet in one focus group. The bilingual mother Victoria met in person, and Ramona met by Zoom. Interviews were collected from February to March 2022. The participants were in attendance and met with me in early February and later met with me in mid-February, since the program was canceled due to several snowstorms in January. Ramona met with me in March because of more inclement weather, so we decided to use Zoom to avoid further delay. The interviews were 57 to 120 minutes long. Follow-up conversations were scheduled to clarify any questions I had and verify descriptions for accuracy. Data were analyzed after the Spanish translation was completed. Once data saturation was reached and all participants were interviewed with follow-up questions, data collection ended. Several audios of recorded interviews were transcribed and validated through member checking.

Analytic Procedures

The audio recordings of each interview were stored on the voice app on my iPhone. I also transferred those recordings onto a confidential USB drive that was used solely for interviews. Once the interviews were conducted and audio recorded, the transcription process began by utilizing Rev.com and by me serving as the bilingual translator. Transcriptions conducted of each audio recording were typed up. Each verbal statement was transcribed into written form. Also, nonverbal cues that were observed (but not recorded) during the interview were also noted, such as a nodding of the head and facial expressions when answering questions.

Transcriptions were analyzed by looking for common patterns, themes, and relationships. Each theme was organized by topic using the research coding software Dedoose and hand coded mostly for the Spanish-speaking interviews. Once coded, patterns and trends that may have led to specific outcomes regarding Latinx parent engagement experiences were explored.

Trustworthiness

To improve validity and reliability, I used qualitative approaches to offer reliable outcomes by triangulating the data; utilizing the interview data collected from in-depth responses from semi-structured interviews; and relying on member checking, data analysis, data saturation, and self-reflection. Since this study is concerned with Latinx parents' perceptions on their parent-involvement practices, interviewing parents from the Central American local community where all their children attend the same school district allowed for more dialogue and probing for deeper questioning.

Ethical Issues

The procedures to carry out this study were aligned with IRB ethical standards and approval. An initial letter of invitation was given to the parents when they dropped off their children, followed by a preliminary meeting that was scheduled at parent orientation when parents dropped off their children at the first literacy session where there was a discussion of the research goals. This was done with permission of the language and literacy program director.

Written informed consent in English and Spanish from all individual parents was obtained to outline their participation to be interviewed and audiotaped. A bilingual translator was available on call for any clarifications. In addition, participants were informed that their participation is optional, and they do not have to sign the form if they do not want to participate. Trust was established by having a consistent presence at the site for the entire 14-week program. I was visible during weekly drop-off and pick-up times. I interacted with all the parents and assisted with translations for the tutors and director if necessary. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted at the literacy site where questions to parents followed the interview protocol and were translated when necessary.

In sum, taking these steps ensured that I adhered to all the protocols; also, I had to remain aware of any biases in my role of the researcher. I was mindful of reflectivity throughout the data-collection process and my interactions with the participants.

Conclusion

Understanding parent-involvement practices between Latinx families and schools is key to student success. However, many studies do not examine what factors lead to

Latinx families becoming involved and their preferences to participate in their child's school. This study used a qualitative design to illuminate Latinx parents' perceptions of parent involvement, the successes, and obstacles they have encountered at their school, as well as how their involvement practices align with and differ from the Epstein Model.

Chapter 4: Results

In this qualitative case study, the purpose was to explore Latinx perceptions of parent involvement at school and at home, and the ways in which their children's schools respond to parent engagement and advocacy. This chapter explains from the perceptions of Latinx parents, the barriers and motivations that affect Latinx parent involvement, and engagement in their child's education by comparing with the typical models put forth by schools that target White middle-class families rather than culturally diverse parents. According to Yin (2014), using a qualitative design acknowledges the value of collecting and presenting data from a variety of sources as evidence to any study. This chapter illuminates the findings that were acquired from the data collected.

There were three overarching themes that emerged from interviewing Latinx parents: varying definitions of parent involvement compared to Epstein's six types of parent involvement, reasons they advocated for their children, and factors that prevented parent involvement. A thorough review was conducted of all transcriptions and field notes. Copies of all transcriptions were made, and notes were taken on the documents where I began to process the data. In addition, I listened to the interviews multiple times where I highlighted shared perspectives. This exercise was repeated to ensure all the transcriptions were analyzed for emerging themes to code correctly. Data were managed and analyzed with the use of Dedoose, an app for analyzing qualitative data. The transcriptions were uploaded to Dedoose and were coded for analysis.

Once all the data was transcribed, I began the formal coding process. The data were reviewed multiple times for general themes and recurring words. Three themes emerged and are further discussed in this chapter.

Research Questions and Summary of Findings

The focus of this study was to uncover and capture viewpoints from Latinx parents concerning their perspectives on parent involvement. It was found that Spanish-speaking parents' conception of parent involvement was educating the child to be a good person, overseeing that homework was completed, and providing emotional support. This importance of morality holds true to the term *educación*. It is consistent with a child-rearing goal found in the literature, where moral, social, and academics are not completely separated and are instead intertwined. There were cultural differences that existed between the Spanish-speaking parents and bilingual parents in terms of communication with the school, participation at the school, and beliefs in the role they assume for homework. This study explored each participant's engagement practices of parent involvement, how they demonstrated parent involvement at home and traditional models at school, their advocacy efforts at the school, and the barriers they faced. This study's exploration rests on Epstein's (2009) theoretical framework of six types of parent-school involvement because of its prevalence used in schools. This study defined *parent involvement* both in terms of activities participated at the school from Epstein's Model and home-based strategies. The study also compared Epstein's Model to the Latinx parents' involvement activities and the barriers they face as they advocate for their children. My research questions and field notes were guided by definitions of parent

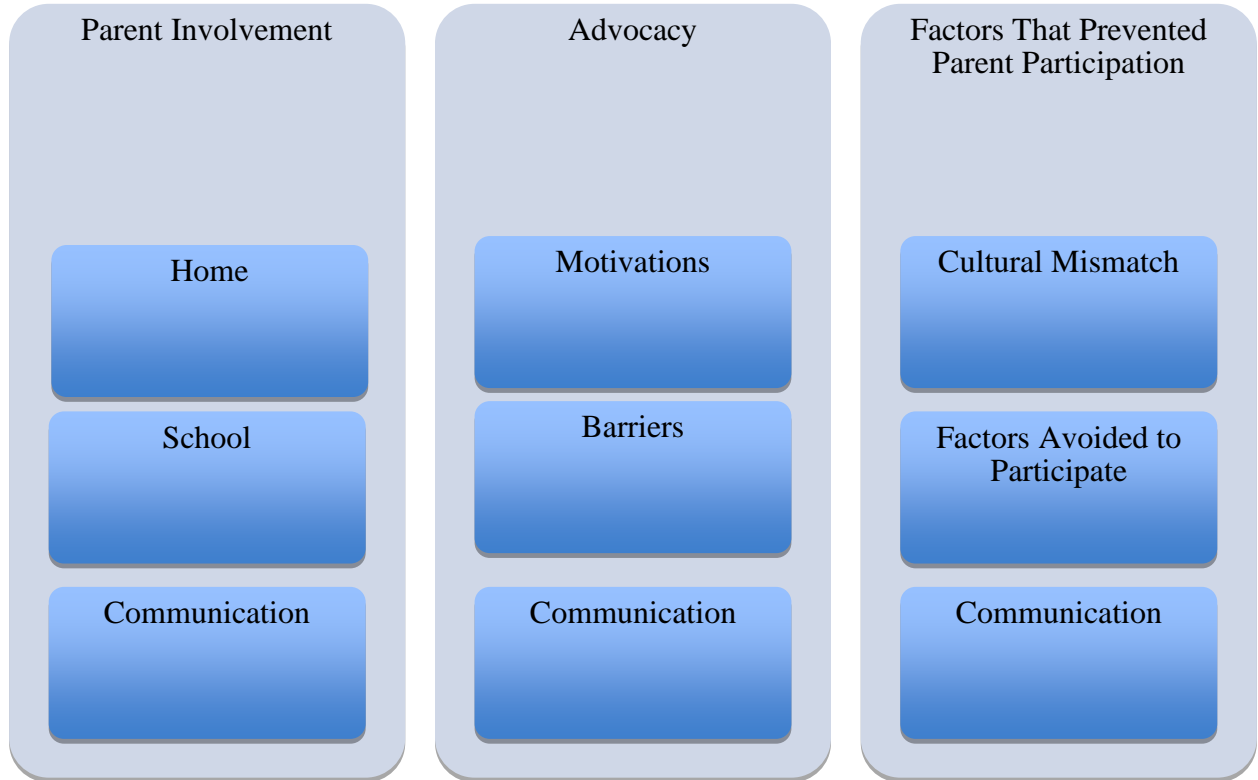
involvement found in the literature and Epstein's Model. The results of this study answered the following research questions:

1. How do Latinx parents define school-based and home-based parent involvement, and how do those understandings differ between bilingual versus Spanish-dominant parents?
 - 1a) How do Latinx parents advocate for their children, and what barriers do they face?
 - 1b) In what ways are Latinx parents' involvement practices in schools aligned with Epstein's model, and how do they differ?
 - 1c) Is Epstein's model appropriate to use in schools with Latinx families?

Development of Codes, Themes, and Findings

During data analysis, common codes emerged from all the participants, which led to the three themes. Following the completion of interviews, I began to analyze data by listening to the interviews several times and reading the transcriptions in Spanish to carefully check the translation for codes and then reviewed the English transcriptions for any similar codes by the Spanish-speaking parents. As I listened to their interviews, I allowed their words to speak to me. I spent time reflecting on their responses. Any fieldnotes were compared to the transcripts. While reviewing the data for meanings or topics, I wrote down words and phrases that represented these topics. By diving deep through the codes from the participants, three themes emerged. These three themes guided the findings of this study (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Codes to Themes



The first theme revealed different interpretations of parent involvement. One of the first interview questions examined how Latinx parents define parental involvement. The Latinx parents in this case study were asked, “What do you think parent involvement means?” Participants mostly associated the concept of parent involvement as a somewhat separate activity from home and school. Parents felt that their involvement at their child’s school meant to participate in school-based activities, know if they have homework, understand what is going on with their child, and remain available for their child. The degree to which the parent was involved was different among the participants in relation to cultural norms, the Epstein Model (2009), and their native language.

Indeed, some of their activities at school differed from the Epstein Model (2009). This was especially true for the three Spanish-dominant parents. *Educación* is a much more comprehensive term than the American definition of *education* for the Spanish-speaking parents. *Educación* is more intimate and ties in interpersonal and academic goals. It does not merely focus on academics but includes respect, good behavior, and morals. The Spanish-speaking mothers did not volunteer their time at their child's school but instead made themselves available to their children at home, even if that meant they had to live on a single-family income. While these mothers attended parent-teacher conferences and sport activities, they put more of an emphasis on their child's activities at home and invested their time there, since the parent activities at school were not relatable or seemed non-fulfilling in meeting their needs. Since these mothers were actively helping their child at home, they sometimes felt lost in doing so with all the homework since language was a barrier and the curriculum differed from their educational experiences.

All of the mothers reported that the schools did not provide adequate information or ideas to families on how to help their children with their schoolwork as the Epstein Model suggests, especially in Spanish. There was an exception during Covid-19 where the school held Zoom sessions to explain content; however, it was overviews and not relatable for this group of mothers. The Spanish-speaking mothers had difficulty following some of the parent seminars since the curriculum differed from the way they were taught. The new age of learning math and balanced reading were not familiar ways of learning. It was appreciated by this group of mothers who were willing to participate to learn the best way they could.

Spanish-speaking mothers said they did not feel welcomed by the PTA or parent-led groups that were led mostly by White parents who did not speak Spanish. While these families would like to participate in decision-making activities as the Epstein Model suggests, there were language limitations and cultural mismatch for their participation. The definitions of parent involvement at home and school and how they communicated and received information from the different schools emerged to develop the first theme.

In results related to the second theme, the mothers indicated the motivations they had encountered in advocating for their children. All the parents reported an event where they had to advocate for their child, whether for special education services, bullying concerns, or disciplinary issues. Parents expressed ideas of what motivated them to advocate for their children and barriers that hindered their efforts. The Spanish-speaking parents discussed their attempts to communicate and understand their rights as parents when advocating for their children. There was a lack of translators or having to wait for Spanish-speaking personnel to assist. In contrast, most of the mothers were uniform in feeling welcomed by their child's teacher and mutual respect from them. The mothers talked about tensions between their child's school and themselves for issues they faced with disciplinary problems.

Although barriers existed in advocating for their children, there were hopeful moments of successfully partnering with their child's school. Parents felt welcomed and encouraged to participate in their child's education by their child's teachers. All the parents reported that the teachers knew them when they came to the school. The Spanish-speaking parents felt comfortable if they needed to communicate with their child's

teacher about a problem their child was experiencing with bullying and bus-related issues.

The last theme that emerged suggests there are factors that prevented parent involvement. A code common across all three themes is communication. Communication was broadly discussed in terms of speaking Spanish only: receiving communication in English and communicating with teachers. There was an inadequacy in the delivery of information and lack of language support to parents. A lack of translators was of concern and created a natural barrier, preventing families from fully participating in their child's school. Communication differed in each of the buildings and became scarce as the children moved through the middle and high schools.

Cultural mismatch between parents and staff was evident. The cultural mismatch hindered parents from participating in activities such as PTA-sponsored events and school leadership decision teams. The Spanish-speaking parents did not see the value in some of the activities held by the parent-led groups since they felt their greater impact was shown at home where they oversaw their children's maturity and growth. Spanish-speaking mothers felt that they were not understood because of their language barrier and feelings of intimidation. Most mothers expressed how the parent-led organizations were non-Latina, which was considered one of the reasons why they did not participate. One of the other factors was that one of the buildings was in the primarily White part of the district where there was a disconnect to the Spanish families, whereas the other buildings were zoned in a primarily Spanish part of the community.

Chapter Overview

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part One describes the parents' demographics and presents vignettes that define parent-involvement practices. Part Two describes the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of the parents' interview data. This chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

Part One: Participants

This part describes how the participants were chosen, impressions the participants made on me, followed by participant demographics. As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, all the participants' children were required to attend the literacy-enrichment program from this one district located in the same community as Philip and James College. The participants in this study were Latinx parents who all lived in the same school district, which is predominantly Latinx. However, the Spanish-speaking parents were zoned in one area of the district where the elementary school was primarily made up of Latinx students. One of the parents lived in two areas in the district and was zoned for two different schools over the years. She was able to compare her experiences with those schools against other parents. The Latinx families that spoke primarily English lived in an area of the district where it was predominantly White, and their children attended a different elementary school. There was a stark contrast in how the schools communicated with parents.

This study included five families of Latin American descent. Four of the mothers, including one second-generation family, emigrated from parts of Mexico and El Salvador. One mother was of Colombian descent but born in the United States. Three of the parents were working full-time jobs, while the other two mothers were stay-at-home

moms. There were two parents who were bilingual Spanish and English. Three of the parents had little to no English proficiency. All the mothers were married and were cohabiting with their spouses. See Table 1 for the demographic characteristics of the participants.

As discussed in Chapter 3, participants were recruited from the Saturday Literacy Program. Once I completed the IRB application with Molloy University, I obtained permission from the Saturday Literacy program director to attend their first meeting with parents. Parents who volunteered to participate in this study were either interviewed at the library in a private room or on Zoom. Purposeful selection of parents from Central and South American descent living in the school district was selected. Two mothers identified as El Salvadorian, one as Mexican, one as Ecuadorian, and one as Colombian.

Participants were asked 16 semi-structured questions to capture their perceptions, which allowed for free-flowing conversations. They were welcomed to use their native language of Spanish throughout this study, and three of the mothers chose to do so. The data collected through these interviews were in English and Spanish. Spanish interviews were translated in English for analysis.

Once the parents were identified, I made appointments to immediately meet with them after dropping off their child at the program. There was one parent who was more comfortable meeting online through Zoom since weather was a concern. Parents were told that the interviews would last up to an hour and follow-up conversations could be needed to clarify responses. Three parents agreed to meet as a focus group since they had varying schedules and other children to care for. Those parents met with me at the

campus library in a private room. Parents at that time were reminded that their participation was completely voluntary and could withdraw from the study.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Name	Gender	Ethnicity	Years in District	Bilingual	Marital Status	Number of Children	Focus Group or Individual Interview
Juana	Female	El Salvadorian	11	No	Married	3	Focus Group
Eufemia	Female	El Salvadorian	7	No	Married	2	Focus Group
Manuela	Female	Ecuadorian	5	No	Married	6	Focus Group
Victoria	Female	Mexican	15	Yes	Married	3	Individual Interview
Ramona	Female	Colombian	20	Yes	Married	4	Individual Interview

Data Collection

Visits were arranged at the literacy program held at the college campus library with parents who met the criteria to participate in the study. The semi-structured focus group interviews revealed that the language of preference was Spanish. The mothers were informed that their participation may shape Latinx parent involvement strategies in the future by allowing for schools to make more targeted activities for Latinx families. I showed them the picture on the flyer and told them about the women in the photograph. I described that it was four generations of Latina women on my mother’s side of the family, including me.

In the next part, vignettes of the five participants are provided. A quote that embraces parent involvement at home or school and dedication to their children’s well-being are discussed. As I combed through the data and listened to the interview’s multiple times, I captured the spoken words that are a testament to their parent-

involvement activities, how these parents encourage learning at home, and parental monitoring. Pseudonyms for each participant are used to conceal the identity of the parents.

Juana

Yo en la mañana trabajo, en la tarde hacemos las tareas todos los días, hago todo lo posible, porque yo no sé mucho inglés, pero trato a manera de ayudarles porque no sé exactamente.

In the morning I work, and in the evening, we do our homework every day. I do what I can because I do not know a lot of English, but I try every way to help them because I don't know exactly how to do it.

Juana proudly spoke of her three children, ages 5, 7, and 14. She was realistic about her children's abilities in school and how she tries to help them despite her lack of spoken English. Juana was El Salvadorian and had been living in the district for 11 years with her husband. This school year, Juana was excited she had a teacher who spoke both English and Spanish, making it easier to communicate with her. She was aware of school events and the moms that typically attended them. During the interview, she explained that she saw the same people at certain school events such as parent-teacher conferences. Juana said she tries to see the teachers for positive things or negative events, since that will only help her children improve and have better educational outcomes.

Eufemia

Yo pienso que es muy importante dentro y fuera de la escuela. Los dos son importantes porque hay que tratar de en la casa, tratar de ayudarlos con un poquito de inglés, pero hay que tratar ayudarlos en las materias, educarlos, decir

que tienen que ser constantes, tratar de ser buenos alumnos y dentro de la escuela, tratar de hablar con los maestros, preguntar cómo están los niños, cómo siguen, si están haciendo sus deberes y si los están haciendo bien.

I think it [parent involvement] is very important in and out of school. The two are important because you have to try to help them in the house, try to help them with my very little English, but you have to try to help them with the materials, educate them, tell them constantly that they need to try to be good students in school, try to talk to the teachers, ask them how the kids are doing, if they are doing what they are supposed to be doing, and if they are doing them well.

Eufemia found that parent involvement is a two-way street, not only at school but also at home and talking to her children about what it means to be a good student.

Challenged with a language barrier, she found herself trying to help her children the best she could. Eufemia explained that she relied on her children to do most of the work, since they know more than she does about the curriculum. Despite this, she is motivated to go to their school and see all their work, talk to the teachers, and be supportive by helping her child with practical applications in math. Eufemia enforces good behavior and manners in her home by talking to her children about the importance of school and communicating with their teacher.

Manuela

Yo también les enseño, así que acaben sus tareas. Yo hago todo, pero cuando llega fin de semana yo sí les digo atender sus camas, la ropa sucia, limpiar el cuarto. Cuando uno sale a la calle tiene que ser educado, saludar a las personas mayores, ser caritativos eso es importante para mi.

I also teach them, like to finish their homework. I do everything, but when the weekend comes, I tell them to make their beds, get their dirty clothes, clean their room. When a person goes out in the street, they have to be educated, greet their elders, and be caring. These are important for me.

Manuela came to the United States 23 years ago at the age of 19 from El Salvador. Manuela had the most children from this group of mothers. She has six children, and four lived with her during the time of the interview. She works only during the summer months when tourism is at its peak. She made every effort to help her children succeed outside of school with sports or teaching them how to behave. At times, she relied on her older children to help her youngest. Manuela had her first child taken away from her when she arrived in the United States by her ex-husband. He made false accusations of abuse, and her daughter was placed in his care. He fled to Ecuador with her daughter, and she was left to start over alone. It took almost nine years for her to see her daughter, and she is now building a relationship with her. When she told her story, her pain was evident in the expressions she made, yet she remained optimistic that they could bond like mother and daughter. From the experience, she placed an emphasis on her children to be independent and hardworking. Manuela feared that they would not love her and that is why she is always available to them. She provides opportunities for her children to learn things at home and take care of one another.

Victoria

Just to be on top of them, be always consistent on checking to see what they have in their books and book bags, going through whatever homework, asking them questions after the day, and not just getting one-word answers, like good. I ask,

“Okay, it was good because of...?” Nothing is being handed to them; it is teamwork with me, them, their sports, and school.

Victoria approaches every situation head on and is fearless when advocating for her children. She is the oldest of four and has three children of her own, ages 7 to 20. Victoria immigrated to the United States with her mother and siblings from Mexico when she was 6 years old to reunite with her father in Los Angeles. Her father had been working in the US for several years to provide for his family. Victoria instills hard work in her children, just as she had endured when coming to the United States. She does not take things for granted and pushes her children to be the best they can be. Victoria shared that she had to assist in the family business since her father passed away unexpectedly. This was not by choice but because family means everything. She has been actively involved in overseeing the daily operations and hopes that her children will see how her dedication to the family business will affect them in a positive way and do the same for their families one day.

Ramona

Early on, I wanted to make sure I was engaged in the school experience as a parent. I became part of the PTA in our school. In elementary school, I was very active on those committees and fundraising and class parent. There were very few Latinos in my oldest son’s school. And because of that, I started a Hispanic Heritage Month celebration in our school that we’ve done for 10 years. I wasn’t as active in middle school. I focused more on elementary school.

Ramona was the only US-born participant. She is of Colombian descent from her mother, and her father was American. She has four children, ages 12 to 20. She considers

her children blended since her husband is Puerto Rican. Ramona is bilingual but prefers to speak in English since that is her native language. Ramona seemed determined to be involved at every level of school, even if she had to go to a board meeting to make her points clear. Ramona noted that her parents were very involved in her education, and she had recently completed her master's in social work after years of being out of school. Ramona witnessed many Hispanic parents in need of translation services and became the parent that others would turn to. She found that Latina women need support and decided to organize a group for Latina women to learn about resources and support for them. After encountering a disciplinary situation at school with her son, she led a crusade to defend her son and actively involve herself more at the school. She participates in many committees and works as a cultural broker for a state-funded agency so that schools understand and celebrate cultural differences.

The first part of this chapter describes how the five participants were recruited for this study. The data collection took place from February to March 2022. The characteristics of the participants are illustrated in Table 1. Vignettes articulated each mother's voice and painted a portrait of their perceptions. During this process of reading and reviewing the transcriptions, I wrote down my impressions, which were used to organize codes and frame my analysis. I looked at how each participant responded to the questions and at all their answers to identify consistencies and differences in their perceptions, involvement at home and school, and perceived barriers and opportunities. Figure 1 outlined the themes and sub-themes from the data collected.

Part Two: Research Themes

This part discusses the themes found in this study: Parent Involvement, Advocacy, and Factors that Prevented Parent Participation. These themes are discussed using the interviews collected from the participants. As shown in Figure 1, each theme is described by the subtheme found. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Parent Involvement

This section presents the definitions of *parent involvement* that emerged during the interviews. Prior to interviewing the participants, I observed the parents drop off their children at the literacy program where they were greeted by their child's teacher. One by one, the parents asked what time their child should be picked up and thanked the teacher. At pick up, the parents engaged in brief conversations with the teacher to receive a quick report of their child's session and what their learning targets were for the morning. While there, I also became a translator for parents who needed assistance in communicating with the staff and completing forms. I felt this was important for me to watch, not only to grasp a sense of the interactions between the parents and teachers but also to become a part of the landscape so that I became a familiar face to build trust. As a visible participant, I learned that parents having their children participate in the literacy program is an example of how devoted they are to their children and how they want them to do well in school.

As I read and reread the interview transcripts, my focus was on understanding the participants' perceptions of parent involvement. I began by listening to the audio recordings. It became apparent that they believed in their children and wanted to give them the best opportunity to be productive citizens. The mothers in this study were

motivated to learn what their children are learning, even if they could not fully understand. They would find ways to participate with them at home by doing homework, talking to them about their day, relaying the importance of going to school, having open communication, and being present for their children. These factors that define their meaning of parent involvement are further discussed below.

Home-Based Involvement

Parents shared their perceptions and meanings related to parent involvement at home. All the parents stated they helped their children with homework at home. There was parental monitoring and a desire for them to connect with schools in a meaningful way. This may not have come in the obvious forms from the Spanish-speaking families. Fostering natural growth through having their children do domestic chores, following rules and routines, and teaching them about manners and values were priorities in their roles as parents. They also reported that they enforced homework to be completed with their help or with an older sibling if they were unable to help. The Spanish-speaking mothers in this study shared that if any homework was given in Spanish class or math concepts not including word problems, they could assist any of their children with practical applications of multiplication or division. As Juana stated, if her children come home saying, “*estamos con multiplicaciones o estamos en divisiones*” [we are doing multiplication; we are doing division] or “*si tenia algo como geografia en España, yo me enfoco mas*” [If they have something like geography that’s in Spain, I focus more], Juana could attend better to her children’s needs if the homework was familiar or in Spanish than in English.

All the parents reported that they are constantly monitoring their children's homework. Bilingual parents ensured that their children completed their homework and created a structure in cultivating their children to committing themselves to not only schoolwork but also to any extracurricular activities. Mothers in the study really connected to the interview question of "What is the most important thing that a parent can do to help their child succeed?" The parents were unanimous that their role in helping their child succeed was to supervise their schoolwork.

They described how they were able to communicate with their children and shared how they work with them at home. Enforcing a homework schedule for completion was consistent among this group of mothers. Victoria put it succinctly:

When my kids are going to start something like homework, I tell them you are going to finish something; we are not going to leave anything halfway. You make a commitment to what you need to do at home and school. It is all about commitment.

The mothers held their children accountable for their schoolwork, whether they helped them or a sibling. The descriptions were all based on support of simple tasks done at home, sitting with their children during homework, and being aware of how their child is doing in general.

Eufemia described her involvement at home by leaving her job so she can be more supportive at home. She spoke about how her children would call her when they needed help or had a problem. This constant calling led her to rethink her job and how her work schedule did not allow for her to be home when the children came from school. She described her experience that led her to quit:

Dejé de trabajar porque no me podía dividir en dos personas. Cuando empezó la escuela yo era la única que tenía que ir. Si tenía algún problema, entonces siempre quedaba en mi trabajo y me llamaban que tenía quien me ayudaba, yo era la única responsable en el taller y no podía ayudarlo como necesitaba. Entonces por eso tuve que dejar mi trabajo y ahora los ayudo más porque antes no los ayudaba nada, tenían poco menos rendimiento en la casa. Claro que trabajar es más importante, pero también yo puedo ayudarlo más en la casa. Creo que los frutos de ahora van a tener en el futuro, van a tener recompensas.

I stopped working because I couldn't split myself into two people. When school started, I was the only one who had to go in. If they (the kids) had a problem, I was always at my job and they called me to say that they needed someone to help. I was the only person in charge in the factory and I couldn't help them as needed. So that's why I had to leave my job and now I help the kids more because before I didn't help them at all. We have a little less income at home. Sure, work is more important, but I can also help them more around the house. I think that the fruits of life will have rewards in the future; they will have rewards.

Eufemia's involvement was extended because by being a stay-at-home mom, she could support her children more by helping them with homework and by being present; it would alleviate any burdens she and her children experienced. While her income was important, her availability to her children was invaluable. I noted in the interview that Eufemia was passionate about her children and the need for her to help her children, no matter the cost. She became elated when describing how she made sacrifices to stay home for the time being.

Being present at home was important for all the mothers, whether they worked and were able to be home for the children in time for homework or be a stay-at-home mother. Juana commented that she tries to see what her children are learning when she is home:

Cuando estoy en casa trato de ver qué estás haciendo y cómo va. Entonces como mi hijo tiene clases en español, yo me enfoco más con él porque de mi hijo pequeño no me siento tan confianza en los estudios de él, pero estoy ahí constantemente en sus tareas.

When I am at home, I try to see what they are doing and how it's going. So, like when my son has classes in Spanish, I can help more with him than my youngest son since I am not that confident in his studies, but I am constantly there for their homework.

Juana wanted to ensure that the homework was getting done and through her presence send the message to her children that education is important. She felt that she could participate in her son's Spanish class more than the other subject areas. Her youngest son's homework was not familiar in the way she had been educated, making it more difficult for her to help him: *“En México, la multiplicación y la división es un poquito diferente”* [In Mexico, the multiplication and division are a little different.] The way this mother was involved was by being present as much as possible during homework, even if she was out working. Juana also shared that even if she is not home, the routines she has placed in her home are working:

Entonces pienso que es importante cuando llega a la casa, yo les digo que tienen tareas. Mis hijos pueden jugar pero después de la tarea pueden. Cuando acaban

de hacer sus tareas, les toma unos 30 minutos. Les pongo a leer, a repasar lo que hicieron en la escuela, comen algo y les doy la tarde libre, porque yo se que el estudio es importante, pero creo también es importante relajarse, tratar de descansar. Es la rutina que yo llevo, al menos en mi casa. Como no estoy en casa todos los días es la rutina que ayuda en las casa.

Well, I think when they get home, I ask them, ‘Do you have homework?’ My children ask to play, but only after they finish homework. It takes them about 30 minutes to finish. I make them read; we talk about their day at school, we eat something; then I give them free time. Studying is important, but I think relaxing is important, too; you have to rest. This is the routine I have in my house. Since I am not home every day, this routine helps.

The mothers shared their insights and perceptions of parent involvement at home—mostly about how they supported their children’s academics.

However, Manuela also spoke about the importance of routines in her home related to domestication and how the children followed the rules. One of the rules was no technology until any homework or housework was completed: “*Cuando se ponen a jugar en la tableta, uno le tiene que decir que tiene que estudiar más.*” Manuela made sure her children were accountable and responsible at home, which she believed would lead to a more productive life:

Dentro de casa antes de estudiar con ellos primero levantarnos, desayunar, alistarnos para que se vean bien en las escuela, presentables, después obviamente aseo domésticos, comida etc. Después de hacer eso tenemos que recoger. Van a escuela, después de escuela trato de hablar con ellos, pregunta cómo les fue, qué

hicieron, o sea, tratar de hablarles porque a veces ellos me dicen tu no me preguntaste como me fue escuela. Entonces es muy importante que ellos me digan para qué me pongo atención.

In our home, before studying, they wake up, they get dressed nice, so they are presentable, and then we do domestic things like food. Later, we clean up. They go to school and after school, I try to talk to them because at times, they say to me, ‘How come you did not ask me how my day was at school?’ So, it is very important for me to pay attention to them.

It was obvious that Manuela’s routines were valued by her children. Manuela also emphasized the importance of greeting people, whether on the street or in school. She wanted them to be respectful to all that they met: “*Entra cualquiera que sale saludar, o cuando van a las escuela a saludar a su profesora eso es lo primero*” [Whoever enters, they have to greet them, or when they go to school first thing, they greet their teacher]. They also were attentive to her conversations with them after school and wanted her attention. This was a strength in her family dynamics.

On the contrary, Victoria discussed a concerted cultivation style of parenting. She described parent involvement at home as talking to her children about homework and getting them to their after-school practices and appointments: “I am constantly checking their books, messages, and their book bags. I try to go through whatever homework. I talk to them about their day. My daughter is very talkative, and she tells me things more than my son.” She felt “They do have different activities, so it’s not just school; it’s also outside of that.” Her daughter was a cheerleader and she explained that “she does full-year cheer and that means that she gets to the gym three times a week, for a couple of

hours. They do what they have to do, and we go to different competitions. I have to get them there.” These were the areas of her concern at home. Her values rested on instilling her children’s commitment to their activities and her commitment to see them through. Victoria provided evidence of involvement in her children’s education via the following self-report: “Nothing’s being handed to you; we are a team.” This was her mantra throughout the interview.

What mattered most for Ramona was navigating the school and helping her children transfer their skills that she instilled in them:

If my kids had a project, it’s not just me helping them with the project, but helping them understand how to complete it, because these are going to be the skills they can perhaps use in other things in their lives like the next project or something not school related—maybe for work in the future.

She was highly engaged with her children at home and wanted them to excel at whatever they were good at. She supported them every step of the way. Ramona was mindful and focused when she spoke of her involvement as a parent at home. In her opinion, the quality of their work was more important instead of completing it. This was a stark contrast to the Spanish-dominant parents who ensured homework got done: “I think teaching them how to do things—not just so much getting things done, but how to get it done and why it’s important to do it this way.” Her idea of her children being successful did not solely hinge on academics but what they learned from it. She encouraged her children to be disciplined to see things through effectively, and not at a mediocre level.

Joyce Epstein's framework suggests that parenting education and courses or training for parents help all families to establish home environments. Parents in my study provided life education and holistically integrated educational values at home. The home was an extension of their education. It appears that, culturally, this group of parents relied on their own cultural and familial beliefs to help guide them and support their children at home. Throughout the interviews, the mothers revealed that family and culture are highly valued. Although formal activities are important to families, so are the informal activities at home, being presentable, respecting yourself, and keeping up with your home responsibilities. This became even more evident among the Spanish-dominant parents. When asked "What are your perceptions of your involvement at home?" Eufemia shared that in her culture, placing a priority on getting an education was valued: "*Como dicen, mano dura en al escuela*" [Like they say, a strong hand in school]. Furthermore, Eufemia summed up the Latinx cultural views of parent involvement by life participation: "*Bueno como dicen nuestros abuelitos, que el mejor ejemplo es en la casa, así ellos mismos se van para la escuela*" [Well, like our grandparents used to say, the best example is in your house; that's how you will be seen when you go to school]. This solidifies the notion that natural growth is just as important at home than at school. The skills that are being instilled at home will transfer at home, school, and adult life.

School-Based Involvement

The Spanish-speaking mothers in this study somewhat understood the workings of the school and were in tune to what their children were learning. They also discussed their attempts to become more involved at the school, but language was the biggest barrier. When prompted "Tell me how you see yourself participating in your child's

school as a parent,” the Spanish-speaking parents’ responses provided further evidence that their involvement at school was different from Epstein’s Model and the English-speaking mothers. The Spanish-speaking parents attended school meetings that related to meeting the teacher for conferences, receiving special education services, or if there were bullying issues. However, bilingual mothers had more of an active role in the schools. They were at the school more often than the others participating at different school-sponsored activities; however, they were also at the school for special concerns.

For Manuela, her commitment to parent involvement in the home translated to how she wanted her children to behave in school. Latinx parents take their role of placing a value on manners in their children very seriously. There was a high priority from the parents to motivate their children to work hard and to behave appropriately. As previously mentioned, greeting the teachers was the first thing she wanted her children to do. This led her to believe that this was reflected in how the teachers viewed her:

Yo visite antes del Año Nuevo. Hicieron un meeting para los padres y tuve oportunidad de hablar con la maestra de español e inglés. Me dijeron que mi hijo respeta y le saluda todos los días.

I visited before the New Year. They had a meeting for parents, and I had an opportunity to talk with the English and Spanish teachers. They told me that my child was respectful and greeted them every day.

This reaffirmed to Manuela that the importance of respecting people outside was validated by the school. She also felt validated that the kindness she instilled in her children was evident in school and showed her involvement at home.

Eufemia was involved at the school for her children that were active in band or for her son that was receiving services. Her school participation was typically for Committee on Special Education (CSE) meetings, band performances, or for parent–teacher conferences. She tried to go often if she could and if her children were attending an event or being recognized. She mentioned all the activities she has participated in.

Tuve una reunión. Tenía programada una reunión con él recibiendo speech. A mi hijo le gusta la música, está en una banda de música. Fuimos a su concierto también. Creo que tuvieron otra actividad, creo que fue en Halloween. Entonces yo siempre estoy constantemente en cualquier cosa que tengan. Yo siempre digo vamos pero si mi hijo quiere ir no voy. Pero cuando voy los maestros nos conocen.

I had a meeting. We had a meeting about him receiving speech services. My son likes music; he’s in the band. We went to his concert, too. I think they had other activities; I think it was Halloween. Well, I am always willing to go, but if my son says no, then I do not go. But when I go, the teachers know me.

Eufemia tried to attend activities and sporting events at the school to show she supported her son. I noted that she smiled as she shared her involvement at the school. She enjoyed watching her son participate and wanted him to join the fun.

The Spanish-speaking parents spoke about their experiences during Covid-19 and how the school made more of an effort to reach out to Spanish-speaking parents to bring the school to them. As Epstein pointed out, learning at home helps provide families with information about how to help students at home. In this case, the school district held learning academies so that parents could help their children learn the school materials

better. Victoria noted that she was pleased with the outreach the school did during Covid. Two of the Spanish-speaking parents spoke of the same satisfaction they had during Covid: “Just the announcements in English and Spanish and webinars were great,” said Victoria. Juana noted that prior to Covid, she would feel bad when going to parent–teacher conferences that many parents did not go to and how important it was for her to go to the school. She noted, “*Entonces me da pena que hay padres que a veces no van y no ven a nadie ayi*” [Well, I feel bad when there are parents that do not go and I do not see anybody]. Her observation of not seeing parents at the conferences signaled to her that the parents not seen at the school were less involved. Her presence at the school was important and those not at the school for parent–teacher conferences were missing out on what their children’s progress was at school. Their lack of attendance was a sign of not being involved.

Victoria spoke about how she attended the same types of events as the Spanish-speaking moms when her children were much younger: “They had piano night, and then they had parent–teacher conferences and open school night. This was the first face to face event I have attended since Covid. Last year was virtual.” I asked Victoria how she sees herself participating more in schools like volunteering, and she responded, “No, I will give you the money and I do not do it; I am not the typical...” She went on to say, “I can’t be bothered with those PTA moms.” Victoria was not impressed by the moms on the PTA. They were predominantly White with no Latinx representation, and she felt they were out of touch with most parents in the school who were working. This type of parent involvement to include families in decision-making practices or volunteering did not appeal to her. As Epstein noted, these decision-making partnerships include families

to help develop parent leaders. Victoria could not connect with the parents at their level. Her leadership skills were honed in a business she had to run. Any extra time to volunteer was not possible since what was left in her day was given to her children: “I am assisting my mother with the running of our tortilla shop, which gives me the time to be with my kids.”

It was not that Victoria did not want to fully participate in the school but that she had been communicating with them in other ways: “It’s been on the phone. I’ve been reached out by the parent’s office; I’ve been reached out by the regular office. I have always had a pleasant experience with them.” Despite her lack of physically being in the school for volunteering, she was more involved when her daughter was having issues on the bus or when her daughter was standing up to a bully for another student.

I emailed the principal, gave her the details, and by the time she got home, it was all taken care of. They spoke to my child. The next day, the school had a meeting with all that were involved and dealt with the situation. So, I have been involved at the school, but it was not always for those other [PTA] things.

For Ramona, her involvement at the school did not mirror those of the other parents. Her involvement reflected the Epstein Model. As she explained, she was a staple in the buildings:

Well, early on, I wanted to make sure I was engaged in the school experience as a parent. I became part of the PTA in our school, in the elementary school very active on those committees and fundraising and just the class parent role.

It was clear that she wanted to be an active member of the school community, but Ramona saw involvement as bare-minimum activity. She felt parent engagement was

more meaningful. Volunteering was just one of the ways she participated: “I hear an event; I’ll go to it. If I am free, I’ll attend, right? If they are selling, if there is a big sale to support, I’ll go and attend or try. This is not enough though.” What Ramona wanted more was inclusivity, especially of all the ethnicities in their buildings. She had been a member of the PTA and she brought up the idea of having a multicultural event since the events were more geared for Whites. Ramona noted that their building was predominantly White, and her children were the minority in that particular school. She wanted the Latinx community to be represented:

So, we were one of the very few Latinos in the school. And because of that, I started a Hispanic heritage month celebration in our school that we have done now for many years. So, I am very active in trying to make sure that we honor the different cultures and celebrate Hispanic heritage in our district because of the growing population.

Having felt early on with her youngest child that not enough was done to recognize Latinx culture, she was empowered to bring equity to her district. As Epstein (2002) discussed, decision making helps develop parent leadership and participation. It was evident that Ramona wanted to become an integral member of the school community in an impactful way that served all children and families. She immersed herself in later years on the school’s equity team as well.

Communication

Epstein’s Model presents effective ways to communicate with families by designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications. These ways include having language translators to assist families. The Spanish mothers in this

study revealed feeling uncomfortable communicating with their child's school because of a perceived language barrier unless there was a major issue with their child. The parents discussed their attempts to participate in their child's school and challenges when they tried to communicate. Despite Victoria's bilingualism, she noted that even though she is fluent in both languages, many parents are not: "Being that I do speak English, there is a large community that doesn't." She mentioned that although she sees improvements from the district to do more outreach to Spanish-speaking parents, there are gaps.

Eufemia reported that she is trying to improve her communication with the school by taking English classes. She recognized that she could become more involved in her child's homework if she speaks better English: "*Yo estoy aprendiendo ingles. Creo que aprender inglés, ir a la escuela, les podriamos ayudar mas a ellos para así tratar ayudar*" [I am learning English. I think by learning English, going to the school, we can help them more so that we at least can try to help]. Juana agreed, "*Puedo aprender un poco mas de ingles para poder ayudarles a ellos*" [I can learn a little more English so that I can help them]. I noted that while Juana described her commitment to learning English, she became emotional and took a deep breath. It became evident that their good intentions to learn English were met with frustration of keeping up with their kids' educational needs.

However, when issues arise with Eufemia's daughter, she does not let her lack of English interfere with communicating with her child's school: "*Yo creo que tengo que hablar con la maestra que investigue que es lo está pasando*" [I believe I have to talk to the teacher and investigate what's going on]. Her child's well-being is part of her parent involvement both at school and home. Her continuous effort to learn English has

increased her confidence. Luckily, she has not had to speak to the principal: “*No, gracias a Dios que nunca he tenido problemas con ellos*” [No, thank God I have never had problems with them].

As we further discussed communication with their child’s school, the circumstances around Covid-19 were expressed. Juana shared that while there were announcements made on the internet at her other children’s school, the other building was not so communicative: “*Con mi hijo pequeño trato de estar ahí pero no tengo tanta comunicación*” [With my youngest son, I try to be there, but I do not have much communication]. It became apparent that not all the schools in the district operated in the same way. Some were more engaged in involving families by having materials and announcements in both languages. She further expressed, “*No me siento tan unida en la escuela porque ellos tampoco son*” [I do not feel connected to the school because they are not either].

Feeling disconnected from the school could not have been further from the truth for Juana:

Mi hija va al la [Name of school]. Ahí hay muchas personas que le ayudan a uno, hay muchos que hablan español ahí. La maestra ahí habla inglés y ahí siempre hay alguien traduciendo al español.

My daughter goes to the [Name of school]. There are many people there that help them; there are many that speak Spanish. The teacher there speaks English, but there is always someone to translate in Spanish.

It was apparent that the schools had different ways to communicate to the parents and an effort was made by certain schools to make announcements accessible and make parents

feel welcomed: “*A mi me gusta esa escuela, por eso me gusta y los papeles siempre mandan las notas, cualquier cosa de mis hijos me llaman, cualquier cosa me llaman en español*” [For me, I like that school. I like them because they always send papers and flyers—anything with my children they call, anything it is they call me in Spanish].

Ramona’s communication with her children’s school was also dependent on the school and grade level. It was noted that as the kids got older, there was a big difference between the schools.

So, I’ve had good, bad, and ugly. Good—I’ve been contacted because my kids have done great; I’ve gotten emails that my child is excelling or doing well that week in school. I have communicated with them when I receive notification for my child’s CSE meeting because I have one child in special education and then setting up a meeting for the other one’s 504 plans. Then I was contacted because my son was arrested on school grounds, and we are going to suspend him. So yeah, I have communicated, and they have communicated with me.

Ramona became happy, and excitement was noted in her voice when she reminisced about an email she had received from her son’s teacher.

Yeah, like I said—well in the past, so I know one of the very first things that sticks out of my mind was my son. When he was probably in first grade, the teacher sent home a little written note that she was so proud of my son because of something he did in class. He was a role model, and he did something nice and wanted to let me know that he’s showing a lot of improvement; what a sweet boy.

She marveled and was enthusiastic at how the teacher interacted with her in such a profound way. This was a positive way to communicate with her son's teacher and one that she has not forgotten.

It was apparent that despite some barriers, social media and apps were the main form of receiving communication and being in the know about what was happening in school. As Epstein's Model suggests, communicating with families about school programs and student progress is a two-way street. When asked how she finds out about things, Victoria said, "It comes in Facebook postings; it comes in the kids' flyers sometimes in their backpacks, and the communication between teachers and parents on the apps, so we get those, too." As long as the parents had the technology, they were able to receive ongoing communications from the school.

Parents' home and school involvement was a division of labor and love for these parents. Given that most of the parents were not educated in the United States, they all were dedicated to their children and wanted them to succeed. The Spanish-dominant parents discussed education more as ethical and social values, whereas educational practices were based on academics. Participating in their child's life held more value than academic involvement. The Spanish-speaking parents had different ideas from the bilingual parents about how they were involved and what their role was in their children's school. The bilingual parents' experiences affected their behavior and interactions with their child's school. They believed that to support their children's learning, they must build a strong partnership with the school. These collaborations made their advocacy efforts easier, and their concerns heard. The next section discusses the advocacy efforts made by the parents.

Advocacy

According to Turnbull and Winton (1984), for parents to be instrumental in advocacy, they need strong communication skills, be knowledgeable with legal mandates, and have a deep understanding of the educational system and assertiveness. Parents with limited English proficiency and those educated in another country may find participation in their child's school difficult. This was found to be true with the parents in this study. The Spanish-dominant parents advocated for their children when issues rose. Although they felt comfortable calling the school if there was an issue at the school, they were more passive in participating in decision-making activities for their children receiving special services. They felt that their voices were not heard unless they spoke or understood English better. Their belief was that had they had known more English, they would not feel ignored and feel more valued. This did not hold true for the English-speaking parents. They promoted dialogue with their child's school and participated in many more decision-making activities for their children. The parents were all cheerleaders for their children.

Motivations

During my interactions with the participants, I noticed that the parents became elated when they were able to advocate for their children. This was a new level of decision making for some of the parents. Collaborating with the school enabled them to contribute to their child's educational outcomes and participation at school. Ramona ensured that for her children to be successful, she felt that "relationships are important and building relationships is important because you don't know where it is going to take you, who you are going to meet, and how they can impact your life." This was significant

for her, since those relationships helped her advocate for cultural night at her district and participate on the district's equity team:

With the parent equity team or cultural proficiency team, I feel like I have a different level of involvement that I could sit at a table and help the district plan for their future or plan events or how to communicate their vision or goal for being culturally responsive to the community.

This routine level of involvement advocating for families and students brought joy to Ramona. She also works as a culturally responsive educator for state-funded projects and wanted to bring that same spirit to the community. She had seen shifts over the years in the district. She had been a familiar face at Board of Education meetings where she spoke about placing a high priority on maintaining an active role as a parent in the district.

Ramona believed that building relationships with the school and her community was a step in the right direction to make improvements districtwide. She had noticed that many Latinx families were not engaging at the school, and in her brief conversations with other mothers, she became aware that there was no place for them. They expressed there were not enough groups geared toward them to feel like they belong. Hearing this prompted Ramona to begin a group devoted to Latinx moms. This would be a place where they could talk about real life issues such as money, parenting, and living in the US:

I know not everyone can be in their child's education in the level, say, I am, but I can teach them in whatever level you can is important. Because you're involved in so many facets of the community and working with Latina women and mothers

and being a professional in the field, you're able to offer a different perspective to somebody who may not have the advantages that you do to becoming more involved.

Ramona understood that parents feel the pressure and tend to become fazed by all the social responsibilities that the culture demands. She felt empowered that she could help other Latinx mothers recognize their strengths and motivate them to continue advocating for their children's education.

Feeling lost in learning new ways of solving math problems and how to teach her daughter to read, Victoria decided to enroll back in college when her oldest started school. Realizing that her daughter had learning challenges in school, she wanted to understand the best ways to help her and understand her rights. She said to her daughter, "Honey, when they are coming home with a lot of stuff, and I am not understanding, Mom's going to have to go back to college, back to school." Having worked at one time for the Department of Social Services, she knew that she would have to be active in her children's education and get all the resources her daughter needed to be successful. Victoria had expressed many times in our conversation that she was committed to helping her children and aid in their success in whatever they do. One example was understanding the special education process, where she was able to advocate for her daughter to receive extended time on assignments and tests: "So, with her having extra time, and having all the resources I have seen not only just an academic improvement but her self-confidence. And that is a lot!"

Other participants expressed moments that motivated them to advocate for their children. I observed Juana excitedly share how she enjoys going to her child's school and

having conversations with their teachers who keep her informed about her child's progress.

Mi motivación es cuando voy a la escuela y hablo con la maestra, veo sus trabajos, su cara en algún evento o algo que hizo. Mi hijo puede ser más mejor que yo. Claro que a veces siempre nos falta algo pero la mayor parte son cosas buenas y te sientes motivado a seguir empujandolo.

My motivation is when I go to the school, speak to the teacher, and see their work, their face in some event or something they did...my child can do something better than me. Sure, they might forget something, but for the most part, they are doing good things and you feel motivated to keep pushing them.

Having positive relationships with the school and seeing her child excel helped Juana advocate for her child. This made her go to the school to see all the positive outcomes her child was experiencing in class and openly communicate with her child's teacher. Her child's success gave her opportunities to be present.

Eufemia described her child's teachers as partners in elementary school. She reported that when her children were having difficulties with reading or writing, she would not know what to do. However, the teachers would communicate with her and advise her on what to do next: "*A nos ayudan mucho, nos ayudan a participar también, como les digo, nos incluyen. De las dos formas, ellos ayúdame bastante*" [They help us a lot; they help us participate, too. Like I said, they include us. In both ways, they help me a lot]. This confirmed that support from the teachers created a gateway for her to advocate for her children to receive services. Interestingly, Eufemia's ease with going to school to support her children came from her experience as a young pregnant teen. She

had her first child at 15 years of age and did not have anyone to support her through her pregnancy. She had to learn on her own to ask and advocate for herself: “*Me di cuenta de que estaba embarazada y nadie me quiso ayudar. Yo pedí ayuda a ver quien me podía. Entonces yo estaba sola aquí no tenía tanta ayuda*” [I realized when I was pregnant that nobody wanted to help me. I asked to see who could. So, I was alone here with not much help]. By marrying and having her first child at such a young age, she learned that she had to reach out for help to different people and agencies if she was going to survive. It was then she realized that by going out there and not being afraid to ask, you can “*lucha*” (fight). “*Yo solita. Ahora todo lo que hice fue porque yo me abrí, toque puertas y pude abrir tantas cosas*” [Me alone. Now everything I did was because I opened up, knocked on doors, and was able to open many things]. Her strength and perseverance extended to how she would support her children at school.

As Eufemia opened about her experiences as a young mother, it prompted Manuela to share her feelings about advocating for her children and wanting more for them than what she had. She had high expectations and hopes for her children to excel. “*Yo también paso luchando. Yo digo tienes que estudiar porque hay muchachitas que se embarazan, tú tienes que salir adelante. No quiero que seas como yo limpiando casas*” [I also had to fight. I say to them you have to study because there are many young girls that get pregnant; you have to come out ahead. I do not want you to be like me cleaning houses]. Messages like these teach her children that there is more out there and that they must fight for what they deserve and make the most out of their life.

Bullying issues were a concern for mothers. Although not all had encountered them, it was noted when Manuela spoke about her child’s interactions with a bully on the

bus, she was happy to report that because of her trust in the school, she was able to correct the problem immediately by calling the school and they fixed it: “*Si ven que tu hijo tiene algún problema, si ven que necesita algo que nosotros no podemos ayudar, busca la manera de ayudarte de mi hijo*” [If they see there is any problem with your child, if they see they need something we can’t help them with, they find a way to help my child]. When the issues at school were resolved, there was a sense of relief that the mothers could rely on the school to take care of the problem: “*Me dijeron que ellos iban a hablar con la niña y con los papás. Me sentí mejor*” [They told me that they were going to speak to the girl and her parents. I felt better]. She knew that by calling the school, she would be able to resolve the issue quickly.

Victoria spoke to a time when she was unaware of her parental rights to have her child evaluated for services. As she has navigated through the world of special education, she understands the process and is comfortable with calling the teacher, the director of special education, and calling for meetings. Since she had been informed for several years, she took matters into her own hands, and having worked in a neighboring district, she was able to ask for help.

What I know now, I would’ve pushed for more consistency. My fourth grader just got her diagnosis of ADD. I emailed them for information. I had to call the special education office and ask, “What do I need to do? Who do I email next?” Because I know we have to email someone paper trails and all that.

Armed with this knowledge, Victoria wastes no time when she sees her child struggle. “We’ve been telling you things have been happening, and you’ve been sitting

and watching. No more.” Feeling empowered that she is more knowledgeable, she now calls and emails the teachers to further discuss her child’s progress or lack thereof.

For me to advocate more for her and not just say, “Okay, I will take whatever and I will just sit here and take it.” I did voice my concern— “How can you help her, besides me at home, but how can you help her?”

Having had an opportunity to participate in her daughter’s meetings, she knew that she needed to push for answers and make the school accountable. In the past, she had listened to the teachers at the meeting, accepting whatever they said. She felt that her daughter had a gap in her learning and because of the delays in getting her the services she needed early on, the daughter had missed out on important learning.

Barriers

Advocating for their children did not always come so easily to this group of mothers. When asked what the worst thing was about their child’s school, most of the mothers expressed the difficulty in receiving services for their children, either because they were ill-informed or unaware of their right as a parent. One of the challenges was the considerable amount of paperwork that was involved and the last-minute nature of having to fill it out. The district was not effectively communicating a regular schedule of useful notices in a timely manner as Epstein suggested for schools to do. As Victoria said, “Am I really going to sit here and read everything?” Having to learn special education terminology and processing the information was overwhelming for parents. When asked if Victoria was given the paperwork prior to the meetings to understand it better, she replied, “No. Let me tell you, TikTok has been teaching me a lot of it.” Since

the information was not readily available, she had taken it upon herself to watch informational videos on social media to teach herself.

Similarly, it became apparent that the district was not forthcoming with evaluations and properly classifying Victoria's daughter as previously mentioned. What Victoria did not want for herself was to be ignored like other parents. She had witnessed what happened to other parents who did not advocate for their children: "I have seen other parents where they've gone to district office, and they felt their requests or what they were trying to get done or accomplish were just swept under the rug." In her experience, this was common practice for the district. She had witnessed an incident at the bus stop where a child and her mother were almost hit by oncoming traffic. The bus stops on a main road to pick up the children, and this is known to be dangerous. Parents had asked for it to be relocated to another part of the street. One of the parents had pursued this for a while and advocated for the change, but the district ignored her: "But at that time, that parent felt that her concerns were not being taken seriously because the district would say it was a transportation issue, not a school issue. I understand how the merry-go-round works." Having worked in the neighboring district, she had firsthand knowledge of how parents would get pushed aside until it became apparent that something needed to be done. She had witnessed how certain parents would be ignored or made to wait for answers, especially if they spoke Spanish and did not speak up or ask questions. She referred to the "merry-go-round" as the typical way schools respond to the Spanish-speaking parents and how they were pushed aside. Those were the parents you did not hear about or from. She found that parents who did not question or ask clarifying

questions would be the outsiders. These parents would be told different things or abandoned if they were not persistent.

Manuela understood that she had to be present for her child's CSE meetings, despite not fully understanding the process. Her concern mirrored the other parents in the sample who believed the school overlooked their importance as parents if they did not show up. She went on to note,

Si, me he reunido con la maestra de español e inglés este año. Es para las reuniones de CSE y esas cosas y uno tiene que ir y ley porque si no fuera o no vaya ellos olviden a los padres.

Yes, I have had meetings with the Spanish and English teachers. These were for the CSE meetings, and those things and you have to go because if you are out and do not go, they forget the parents.

She expressed how she felt bad for parents that did not go and nobody is there for their children. Not by their own fault, but more that they are unaware.

Ramona was all too familiar with CSE, 504 meetings, and the seriousness of attending and advocating for her children. Both of her children had been receiving services since they were young. At her oldest son's 504 meeting, it was intimidating, and she needed parent support; the school was supportive even though she was unfamiliar with the process. This prompted her to be more involved and helped when her second child needed an Individualized Education Plan. Advocating did not always come easy for Ramona:

I was learning how to advocate for certain things, certain needs, or modifications.

I think that experience really helped shape how I do it now for my younger son,

because I see the outcome of what my older son went through with his 504 plan and how I need to support my younger son as a student with special education. Ramona encourages parents to do whatever they can. She knows not every parent can be there for everything or at her level of involvement but at any level to help develop their skills to support their children. Her previous negative experiences helped her be successful.

If navigating special education for both her children was not enough, her son was suspended from school. Ramona described how the school did not do enough to support students in positive ways and instead they were more “punitive”: “I do not think they really have things in place to support students, so they don’t face suspension.” Speaking to an incident in school, she described the day she got the call that her son was arrested at school: “So, my child was arrested on school grounds, and I tried to advocate for him. It was a mess, and I just felt the superintendent wasn’t listening to me—that he was not, and neither was the Board of Ed.” As previously mentioned from the other parents, the district had not been receptive to parents:

I felt like they didn’t look at the situation. I felt like the superintendent didn’t read through the situation very carefully and just went with a quick assumption of what he saw in discipline records and misinterpreted something...and then quickly went on to believe my son needed to be out of school for over two months. This experience led to negativity and hard feelings: “I was very angry. I disconnected; I didn’t want to engage, but after my son bounced back, I realized I have to get back into being engaged in the school.” Ramona recommitted herself and a sense of involvement back at the school. She recognized that her participation was needed.

Understanding their child's homework was difficult for the Spanish-speaking mothers. They all concurred that they are involved in assisting their children with homework, whether they are establishing routines for when it is done or overseeing that it gets done. However, there was a lack of consistent information for families on ideas to help their students at home. The idea of learning at home through the Epstein Model was not available to parents. The district did not provide regular ways to involve families in academic learning with homework or other curriculum areas. However, they wanted to help their children understand that their assignments were not always easy and getting someone to help them was another issue. They felt they could not go to the teachers, since they did not want to appear to be uneducated: "*Yo hablo ingles, lo hablo mal, yo no me estoy dando la oportunidad de abrirme*" [I speak English; I speak badly. I am not giving myself the opportunity to open up]. Spanish was the primary language spoken at home and may have played a role in not becoming fluent in English. Since the schoolwork was in English, they struggled with the language. They were aware that this was a part of their development and hindered their ability to fully communicate.

Communication

The strategies the district used to communicate with parents did not exactly align with one of the traditional methods offered by Epstein's Model of school to home. Parents could not fully advocate for their children, since the school did not provide ample notice for them to be aware of meetings and concerns. The parents would attempt to advocate for their children but were not well informed by the school. One example was when Victoria went to pick up her child at school. She was told by one of her daughter's teachers at the nurse's office that her daughter needed support. It was a moment Victoria

would not forget: “By the way, is she getting any accommodations? What do you mean accommodations? Well, I sent an email to so and so and what’s going on? Is anyone talking to you guys? No, what do you mean?” Hearing the news that her daughter needed accommodations from the teacher reaffirmed her idea that communication concerning special education was not valued by the district. Frustrated by not having knowledge of her child’s lack of progress, she jumped into action, asking to see the email and wanting to speak to the principal to find out why she had not heard about this until that day.

Similarly, Eufemia was frustrated in receiving information on services. When her youngest was not making progress, she reached out for more information on home services. She had a meeting with the team and was told her child would go to a special school. She was not comfortable with that decision: “*Yo no le quise mandar porque era muy pequeña y por eso le dije que no me pueden ayudar mandala con profesoras en la casa*” [I did not want to send her because she was very little and that is why I asked if they could help send teachers at home]. She felt her concerns were not validated. She was unaware after this meeting that she would be selecting a special school for her daughter. She received a notification in English that she needed to select a school: “*Pero ahora este ano me mandaron unos papeles diciendo que tengo que aplicar para una escuelita donde ella puede ir*” [But now this year, they sent me papers saying that I had to apply for a school where she can go]. Naturally, she did not understand this letter since it was not in her native language, so she had to bring it to her sister to translate. Furthermore, many of her communications come via email that are solely in English: “*Me mandaron un email solo en inglés*” [They sent me an email only in English]. This form of communication does not enable Latinx parents to become involved in advocating for their children.

Due to the lack of support and communication from the schools, the Spanish-speaking parents understood to speak to the teacher first and then sought assistance from the director. They had learned from other parents to ask questions “*Porque yo trabajo con una señora Americana*” [Because I work with an American woman]. Since Eufemia worked with an American woman, she was told that she needed to talk to the school staff about any concerns. Issues stemming from an incident with a teacher and one of the children, the parent first tried to talk to the teacher to verify if her child was telling the truth. “*Entonces yo confronte a la maestra. Era una maestra que habla inglés y yo le dije que si era cierto*” [Well, I confronted the teacher. She was a teacher that spoke English and I asked her if it was true]. Despite her trying to talk to the teacher, it did not solve the problem. Juana reached out to the administrator to take her child out of that class, with no success. “*Yo quise sacarlo, pero me dijeron que no, que tenía que estar ahí*” [I wanted to take her out, but they said no, that he/she had to stay there]. Even though Juana discussed her concerns to the proper staff members, she did not feel validated by her efforts. She ultimately moved to another section of the neighborhood where she placed her daughter in another building in the district.

In a different school in the district, the parents praise that the teachers are compassionate and feel that the staff recognize that they are Latinx. It became apparent in the interviews that significant differences were found in each school. The schools all had a different way of approaching and communicating with parents: “*Son muy considerados en el aspecto que saben que somos Latinos*” [The schools are very considerate in knowing that we are Latinos]. Hearing this, one of the parents quickly jumped to speak that this was not true in her building. Her school was not as approachable to speak with.

“En la escuela... es un poquito más difícil porque ellos no tienen personas que hablan inglés, no perdoname no hablan español” [In the school...it is a little more difficult because they do not have anyone that speaks English; no, I am sorry that don't speak English]. It became apparent that each school had different resources for monolingual parents. The lack of Spanish-speaking staff was apparent, but there did not seem to be any malice.

On a positive note, the Spanish-speaking parents felt that they were informed to attend schoolwide meetings about their child's progress such as parent-teacher night and open house, even though communication with the teacher might be in English: *“Si, me reunido con la maestra, ellos me conocen”* [Yes, I have met with the teacher; they know me]. The mothers felt that they were aware of the time of year these meetings took place since they had other children in the district, and they would get robo calls to remind them, except these were usually in English. Once they were at the school, they were eager to meet the teacher and discuss their child's well-being: *“Cuando vas a las escuela, hablas con la maestra y ella te da buenas cosas o te dice cosas buenas de tu hijo”* [When I go to the school, I speak to the teacher, and she tells me good things, or she tells me good things about my child].

Even though Spanish-speaking parents did hear about parent-teacher nights, they were unaware about PTA-sponsored activities such as Bingo or even health fairs. This was usually communicated by their children. Parents were not sure why they did not know about these types of activities. They mentioned they did not have to constantly monitor Facebook or the actual school website. If the parent did not have access to social media, parents found it some way: *“We help each other; we have our own network of*

parents.” Parents were savvy in reaching out to other parents. When the announcements were made, they did come in English and Spanish: “That is a big thing.” There was a time where much of the information was not translated. Victoria felt that the district was giving parents choices on what they wanted to be a part of: “They are giving us options of what they are going to be doing in the school and we can take it upon like “Okay, yes. I want to go to that, or no I don’t want to go.” This collaboration with the community connects resources for families and students to enable them to contribute to the community as the Epstein Model recommends.

Parent-centered activities encourage parent participation. Victoria says “They do a lot of parent activities. Right now, they are doing—what is it called? —a webinar; that’s what they are doing. I do see a lot more engagement now for parents.” The district was trying to engage parents by offering webinars to inform them on ways to support their children: “Having activities where parents come in, they get educated on some things, and based on that, they try to figure things out for the kids.” These parents participating in the webinar is an example of how devoted they are to their children and for them to do well in school. Learning and advocating for the kids alongside the district were options and ways the district communicated the importance of assisting their children to succeed.

Discussions on special education were a topic familiar to most mothers. Since Ramona had most of the difficulties early on with her son, she was better prepared when her second son needed more specialized services. She spoke about the district’s willingness to help this time; she had a better experience but was ready for a fight. She felt that because she asked the teacher questions, researched information, and spoke to other parents, she could come to the meeting prepared: “They’re very accommodating

now that I have more experience in that process. I advocate more strongly and so they are very open and they take very much into consideration my thoughts, recommendations, my perspectives.” Had she not done her homework and openly spoken to the director and her son’s teachers, she feels that the relationship building she was implementing would not be as successful.

The Latinx mothers in this study believed that offering moral guidance, monitoring their children’s lives in and out of school, and interacting with the school (whether by invitation or learning from other parents) allowed them to advocate for their children. The mothers in this study acknowledged they had a responsibility to ensure that their child received proper support and services.

Factors That Prevented Parent Participation

Latinx parents voiced genuine interest in participating in their children’s school but faced a cultural mismatch between their own perceptions and that of the school regarding parental involvement. Many Latinx parents brought a unique notion of their parental responsibilities in education derived from their own cultural beliefs, behaviors, and interactions. This section describes the cultural mismatch, barriers to participation, and communication issues that prevented parent participation.

Cultural Mismatch

One of the perceived barriers to parent involvement was cultural mismatch between the school and home. Over the years, the school district has seen a shift in demographics. What was once a predominantly White community now containing a robust number of Latinx families and newly arrived immigrants. The response to this shift has been a slow rollout by some of the schools in the district with the hiring of

Latinx employees. Victoria noted, “There was a new director hired to oversee the math department and he was hired because he spoke Spanish.” It became apparent that the teachers were not as diverse as its community and lacked bilingual resources to communicate with the parents. It was not clear if the teachers were placed in different schools based on their need or language. Victoria was unaware of the ethnicities of all the employees of the district; she was familiar with the school she was zoned for: “I’m not in a concentration where it’s all Hispanic; they are all English speaking around my area.” She thought that because of where she lived, the parents did not need more Spanish-speaking staff. Ramona said she understood that it could be difficult to find teachers that looked like the students, but that should not hinder them from trying to hire more bilingual staff: “They’re learning things in school, but culturally, there’s that mismatch. And so, share with your kids that cultural perspective that the school’s not going to be sharing.” She also felt there was a responsibility of the parents to maintain their cultural identities and teach their children, since the school will not.

A noticeable change seen among the parents was that their children lacked the desire to speak Spanish at home, as most students and staff spoke English at school. This was bothersome to the Spanish-speaking mothers, as the language is part of their heritage. Juana thought that maybe part of the reason was the teacher, or the other students were not accepting of speaking Spanish:

Tal vez es la maestra que no quiere español. Pero los amigos tal vez se burlan o le dicen que es español. A veces los niños son crueles como hacen bullying. Entonces creo que se siente también pena al hablar en español.

Maybe the teacher doesn't want Spanish. But the friends might make fun if he speaks Spanish. Sometimes the kids are cruel like bullies. So, I think they feel bad speaking Spanish.

This did not sit well with the Spanish parents. The parents were proud of themselves as they carried on their cultural legacies and spoke Spanish. They were passionate about teaching their children the values of their ethnicity.

Their language was respected by them, and they thought it could play an important role in their children's future to be bilingual. Juana believed that her children would go much farther if her children were bilingual: "*Yo quisiera tener dos lengua como mi hija, porque es importante tener los dos se hablan*" [I want to have both languages like my daughter because it is important to have both to speak]. They saw how with each child, the younger they got, the less they spoke Spanish: "*El pequeño el no, no tiene ningun*" [The little one...no, he doesn't, he doesn't have any]. The thought was the community and school could be one of the main reasons the children did not speak Spanish anymore: "*Nunca hablamos inglés, sólo español*" [We never speak English, only Spanish]. Since they only spoke Spanish and their children spoke English, it diminished their cultural identity and further pushed these parents outside the parameters of the school system.

For the most part, all the mothers were immigrants except for Ramona. They each brought their Latinx cultural norms and influences to their children. They have been raising their children as they had been raised, different from American ways: Manuela said "*En mi país no teníamos la oportunidad sino todos tenemos que grabarnos. Como mi mamá era muy estricta, entonces será mano dura conmigo*" [In my country, we did

not have the opportunities; we had to carry ourselves. Like my mom was very strict, so she had a strong hand with me]. The differences in cultural views on parenting and schooling also led to barriers. Because some of their cultural views on schooling were different, parents misunderstood their role in American schools. The Spanish-speaking mothers differentiated themselves as more authoritarian and expected their children to not only be respectful to others but also to them. Eufemia instilled moral values in her children: *“Yo les he enseñado poco a poco, como tienen que ser también en la calle y en la casa también”* [I have showed them little by little how they must be also in the street and in the house]. This way of having respect for yourself was a value that was driven into all the children. These parents might not have been in the country long or have much formal education or speak fluent English, but that did not impact their role as parents.

Many of these Latinx parents did not think of parent involvement in the same way as traditional models do. There was an expectation that family members would help one another. Manuela strongly believed that your family helps you to succeed. She spoke about her children pitching in to help the youngest child with his homework or any other task: *“Yo le digo a mi hijo ayúdale a tu hermano, yo se que el a mi no me va hacer caso pero siempre tendemos que la mama es la autoritaria, la mama es la fuerte”* [I tell my son to help his brother, and I know that if he does not listen to me, he knows that they always have to listen to the mother because I am the authority; the mother is strong]. The Latinx parents respect the school but also place value in supporting their child emotionally or with life skills for a better life.

Manuela felt that by helping each other, you will go further in school. She said, *“Porque si nosotros ayudamos en la casa con sus tareas, ellos van a superar en la*

escuela también” [Because we are helping them at home with their homework, they are going to excel in school also]. The act of togetherness— “*Le doy abrazos*” [I give them hugs]—aside from homework is another example that they love and support their children in every way. They spoke about this as they compared their ways to American culture on how the children listen less to their parents. That was not what they believed or wanted their children to behave like.

Joining parent-led organizations such as PTA was not of much interest to the Spanish-speaking mothers as it was for Ramona, who primarily spoke English at home and very little Spanish; therefore, she did not encounter the same language barriers as the other moms. The PTA at the one school sends many of the notices in English, which makes them feel disconnected from the school. Eufemia spoke about how all the notices come, but she is intimidated to participate.

La verdad a mi siempre me llegan papeles de actividades y nosotros queremos participar ejemplo en algún evento, ayudarlos a vender o organizar siempre. Bueno, yo tengo poco de miedo porque a mi me gustaría interactuar con los demás padres pero a veces el inglés no nos deja.

The truth is I always get the papers of activities and we want to participate like for example an event, help selling or organizing. Well, I am a little afraid because I want to interact with them more, but at times, my English doesn't allow me to. The parents wanted to participate, but their language and fear of embarrassment kept them at a safe distance. They were aware of the happenings at the PTAs, but they did not want to be involved for lack of understanding, lack of Latinx representatives, and language barriers. Eufemia tries to become more involved but is not comfortable doing

so: “*Trato de no meterme mucho en eso para no cómo dice, no quedar mal*” [I try not to involve myself too much in that because—how do you say it? —it might not sit well].

The PTA was not responsive to the change in demographics. It was led in English by White mothers and teachers; also, the activities were more traditional forms of engaging parents such as the bake sale, fundraising, and mystery reader. Juana also wanted to join the activities held by the PTA or the school but shied away.

Por ejemplo a veces como hay actividades que ellos hacen ahí. Yo no sé cómo ayudarnos, que mandan actividades que podemos ayudar, cuando necesitan comprar cosas, una rifa. Bueno yo creo que eso si es todos hacemos, mandemos un papelito y un papelito para que nosotros podamos ayudar.

For example, at times, there are activities that they do. I don’t know how to help them...they send activities we can help with, when they need us to buy things: raffles. Well, I think that’s all we can do; they send papers and send a paper for us to help.

These activities were not inclusive of Spanish-speaking parents. They felt it would be best to stay away from the PTA since they did not know how they could participate in other ways that they understood. All they could do was buy things or purchase raffles. It did not seem relevant or a way to fully participate. Manuela would like to be more of a presence, but the language barrier hinders her efforts: “*Si, me gustaria mucho ayudarlos, pero yo se un poco, pero no al extremo de que tratar de hacer un diálogo grande*” [Yes, I would like to help them, but I know a little bit but not to the extreme to try to have a big conversation]. The Spanish-speaking mothers wanted to

participate, but they were unsure if they knew how, and language would be a concern if they needed to have full conversations.

PTA and school-sponsored activities were not for everyone. Most of the parents' efforts were supporting their children in areas they can feel productive and see results. Not all the parents were raised with families visible at the school; rather, they were behind the scenes. Victoria credited herself for her oldest daughter's college graduation: "That's my credit. That's my diploma." This was unlike how she was raised. She noted that not many Latinx families are hands on at school. Her parents worked a lot in their tortilla business and taught her valuable lessons at home. She spoke about her father not being as involved at school, but it showed in different ways: "Well, my father wasn't that either, but the way he showed us, his support was being there for us." Victoria pushed her kids harder than her parents did when it came to school. She consistently said, "I am not typical; I am not the best Mexican." She also said that she took the civil service test and worked in a nearby district. This was not the norm for Mexican women. Staying home and raising the family was more consistent with the Mexican culture. Victoria wanted more than just staying home and being a part of the family business. Twenty years ago, she did not have an opportunity to lead the family business since she had brothers, and the males were more dominant in her culture. It was not widely accepted for a woman to work as much and take a leadership role in the business. This was another reason why she felt that she was "not the best Mexican." She did not fit in with the Mexican women in her community. Victoria noted that she lives in the more English-speaking part of the district. Parenting their children in this part of town was more in the form of the American way, since more Whites lived there, compared to the rest of the district that

was composed of primarily Latinx families speaking Spanish. She adopted the American way of life when she came to this country. She observed the hardships her parents endured and wanted to prove herself to be hardworking and independent.

It was difficult for Ramona to sit back and watch parents feel excluded at their child's school. She is a leader in her community, trying to build bridges between the school and families. It pains her to see families feel excluded because of linguistic and cultural differences.

I hate if families feel that sense of shame, because maybe they're not familiar with American culture or the English language, and schools need to really be more welcoming and open and reach out to parents where they're an asset and they have to value them in the school community.

Since she was first generation, she became very Americanized and navigated the school system easily. She also understood the needs of her community and the shaming that went along with it. She continued to press Latinx parents to take the time to understand their rights as parents and see themselves as partners, not foes.

Factors That Prevented Participation

Factors that prevented participation included challenges in understanding the U.S. education curriculum and pedagogy, little to no assistance from their significant others, and lack of language proficiency. The parents' hesitation in getting more involved with their child's school may come mostly from their lack of English proficiency and not having full knowledge about how the school system operates and their parental roles at different school functions. The parents in this study had varying degrees of education. The Spanish-speaking parents faced more challenges in understanding the American

curriculum. It was common practice for parents to use their children as interpreters for not only communication but also to explain to them their homework. Manuela explained that her children had to explain to her the new ways of doing certain homework assignments and it is not the way she learned: *“Porque ellos tienen una forma diferente y la forma de ellos es bien diferente y ellos entienden. Si uno quiere enseñarle a la antigua ya no puede porque ya todo se quedó mal”* [Because they have a different way and the way they do it is very different, and they understand. If you want to show them the old way, you can't because it will be wrong]. As mentioned throughout the interviews, the parents monitored homework, enforced routines for their children to complete their homework, and had their older children assist their younger siblings. This was the way they could participate, since their way of learning was not how their children were being taught today.

The Spanish-speaking parents wanted to learn alongside their children so they could be knowledgeable. They would ask their children to teach them how things are done and have them read to them. Juana wanted to learn how to help:

Tratas de enseñarle a mi como tu lo haces para ver si es que no sale igual. Si trato de todo lo que aprenden en la escuela a llevarlo a la casa. Obviamente es en ingles yo le entiendo un poco.

They try to teach me how to do it, so I can see if it is the same. I try everything at home they learn in school. Obviously, it's in English; I understand a little.

It was apparent that Juana was a bit embarrassed when she answered. She shrugged her shoulders and her tone softened. She wanted to learn what her children were learning in

school; however, the methods that the teachers were teaching her children were different and the language barrier made it difficult to comprehend.

At the time of this study, all the mothers were living with their spouses. They rarely mentioned their spouses in contributing to their child's schooling. It was evident in the interviews that culturally, it was their responsibility to take care of the home and oversee their children's progress in school. This, too, made it difficult to get out of the house. For Manuela, having a child with a disability was one of her challenges since she had to ensure that her daughter was receiving attention and getting her services.

Yo no le puedo acompañar mucho porque yo tengo una niña que me diagnosticaron autismo, entonces tengo que llevarla a las terapias, recibe clases en la casa, tengo que estar con ella y me toca cuidarla a ella.

I can't go often, because I have a daughter that was diagnosed with autism, so I have to take her to therapy. She has classes at home. I have to be with her, and I have to take care of her.

The responsibility of raising a child with special needs rested on her shoulders, as it did with the other mothers. Getting out was difficult. At one point, Victoria felt like she was a single mom since her husband worked nights. She would rely on her parents to take care of her children so she can work three jobs and go to school:

Especially my mother, because she was a stay-at-home wife. For a couple of years, she would watch my older one, put her on the bus, and take her off the bus. At that point, I had three jobs and was just trying to get everything done...did it and wanted to work in the business world.

The pressures of having to make ends meet and provide for your family meant that something had to be sacrificed. In this case, it was going up to school. Work and having family help did not allow for the time they needed to be at the school for any functions.

There were other reasons parents could not make it to school. Ramona believed in building relationships with the school, but she had encountered an issue at school. Her son was facing disciplinary issues and the school was using punitive measures that seemed unreasonable. Ramona had been an active member of the school community and a familiar face for many years until the situation with her son, when he was arrested on school grounds in his senior year and the district had decided to remove him from all senior activities such as prom and graduation. They were also giving him a lengthy suspension. Ramona was angered, since her pleas with the superintendent and school board went unanswered. She felt that she had built such a great relationship with the district and now it was severed. From this experience, she could relate to how other parents felt ignored when it came to serious issues. I probed her in following up about how her relationship changed with the district.

Oh, it weakened it. Initially, I was very angry. I disconnected. I didn't want to engage, but after I bounced back. And I realized I have to get back into being engaged in the school because I had two other kids going through it.

Ramona had worked too hard to build those relationships to let it fall apart. She still might not have been completely happy with the district but "recommitted" her sense of engagement.

Communication

Prior to Covid, the school did not reach out as often as they did after the pandemic. It was recognized that there was a need to be communicative. For some unknown reason, each school within the district operates independently in how they disseminate information to families. It also became apparent that as their children got older, the less information they received from middle school and high school. When asked about barriers to parent involvement, all the parents stated that schools communicated differently from elementary school through high school. Some of the schools had bilingual staff and translated notices. The elementary schools did a better job of doing this compared to the intermediate and high school. Victoria found that there was a lack of consistency between buildings, especially as the children got older. She described how she told the administrator at her daughter's school that she was not pleased with the lack of communication.

I think communication definitely would be communication. It wasn't enough. I felt that there's a lot more communication and more ways to reach out to parents, whereas before, they were not engaged enough...just throwing flyers and doing all this and phone calls in English and Spanish. I would tell my director, "Hey I get calls from [name] school in English and Spanish; you guys don't do that here."

School leaders and educators must understand that language barriers can prevent parent involvement from being optimized. Attempts by the school fell short between buildings. Each school appeared to offer completely different bilingual resources to families. However, in other buildings, the schools were effective in providing their

families with Spanish translators and offering more face-to-face meeting opportunities that help increase parental involvement for this group of mothers.

Parents felt that language barriers are an excuse on the part of the school. Since Ramona worked in the education field, she felt that language was just another barrier that could be avoided: “We talk about language barriers all the time in our work, right? But should that really hold them back from the language barrier?” She pointed out there are ample ways to communicate with people. The schools are aware of who their families and students are. Efforts to effectively communicate should not be an issue. Ramona continued to emphasize that schools have the capacity to level the playing field:

I mean, the school—especially our schools know our families that are bilingual or monolingual, that they are predominantly Spanish speaking. The schools should make that extra effort to reach out to them in their language, to connect with them, to make those phone calls and find an interpreter or so that maybe they learn a couple of words in their language just to help build that connection and that relationship with them.

It is hard to forgive or make excuses on why schools have not done a better job of communicating with their families, especially knowing that they speak a different language other than English. This was felt by all the parents in the study: “*La mayor parte de las escuelas no tienen gente que hable español o que pueda ayudar en ese aspecto*” [The majority of the schools do not have people that speak Spanish or who can help with that aspect].

The Spanish-speaking parents could not understand why there were not enough bilingual staff in their school. As previously mentioned, the Spanish-speaking parents

were zoned at the same school. It was apparent that their zoned school served primarily Latinx children. The Spanish-speaking parents acknowledged that their school is very kind and welcoming but that finding an interpreter takes time. It is not automatically available. Eufemia spoke about her experience when she called the school:

Yo siempre llamo a la escuela, les pregunto si tienen algún traductor y ellos son muy amables, me dicen esperame voy a buscar un traductor. A nos ayudan mucho, nos ayudan a participar también, como les digo, nos incluyen, pero eso es dependiendo de uno. Eso es lo que no me gusta. Pues realmente creo que no hay muchas cosas positivas en la escuela en el momento con lenguaje.

I always call the school and ask if they have a translator, and they are very sweet. They tell me that they will go look for a translator. They help us participate, too—how do I say it? —they include us, but we are dependent on someone. That is what I do not like. Realistically, there are not many positive things in the school now with language.

The dependency on the school to find translators is frustrating and limits their ability to communicate. This process fatigues the parents and discourages participation. They feel that if they do speak, they will not be understood and will feel embarrassed.

Schools often place blame on parents for not coming to the school. They continue to wonder why they do not come. If schools want increased communication to occur, they will need to translate written materials into Spanish and hire more bilingual staff to meet the growing need. The lack of communication and parents' reluctance to attend meetings falls largely on language barriers. Juana described her fear of not being able to communicate with other parents as deterring her from attending PTA and school events:

“Nos reunimos...nos sentimos como que nos van a decir que no les voy a entender” [We meet...we feel that they are going to say that they don’t understand us)]. Although these Latinx families may be presented with barriers, there is still a drive to be involved.

In this study, Latinx parents found that it was important for them to be involved and participate in practices such as monitoring their child’s homework, creating time for their children to complete their homework as well as helping their children understand and complete their work despite the challenges they faced. Although academics were important to the Spanish-speaking families, they emphasized the importance of their cultural beliefs, responding to their children’s behavior and talking with children about moral issues. This echoed the research on Latinx parent-involvement practices.

Throughout our discussions, it became apparent that there was a cultural mismatch in how the Spanish-speaking mothers were participating versus how the schools were including them. The trend repeated throughout this study was communication. There is uneasiness with the Spanish-dominant parents about their English-language proficiency and qualifications to help at their child’s school. Quezada et al. (2003) found language as the main barrier for many Latinx families to be involved at their child’s school. Since language was not seen as an issue for the bilingual mothers, they acknowledged that the schools could be doing more outreach to the Spanish-speaking parents in the district in a way they understood.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of my qualitative study of Latinx perceptions of parent involvement in their child’s school. I divided the chapter into four major sections. In the first part, I provided a brief explanation of how I determined my data

codes into the themes of parent involvement, with the sub-theme of definitions of parent involvement at home and school, motivations for advocacy, and factors that prohibited parent participation. In the second section of this chapter, I provided vignettes of spoken words that captured the parents' meaning of parent involvement at home or school. In the third section, I discussed the interviews with the Latinx parents and how the themes derived from this part of their perceptions help answer the research questions.

The findings of this study illuminated a difference in the definition of school-based and home-based parent involvement for Latinx and how these differ between bilingual versus Spanish-speaking parents. Latinx parents defined school-based and home-based parent involvement in different terms. It was seen beyond academics and book learning. The Spanish-speaking parents described that their responsibility of parent involvement was being present at home raising their children to be responsible, well mannered, and to oversee that homework was completed. They expected their children to be well behaved in and out of the classroom. Their parenting style was more teaching by example. These parenting practices were foundational for these Spanish-speaking Latinx families.

The English-speaking Latinx mothers in this study took an active approach to ensure that homework was completed accurately, that their children attended all their extracurricular activities, and their children were held accountable for their actions. The bilingual Latinx mothers participated at PTA meetings and being visible at their child's school came easier for these parents. They were prepared to participate in any school meetings, parent-led activities, and volunteer their time at the school because they understood the education system and could communicate easily. It was evident that both

the bilingual and Spanish speaking mothers provided moral and emotional support for learning. However, the Spanish-speaking mothers were considered more behind the scenes in actively engaging with their children.

The participating Latinx parents advocated for their children for a host of reasons despite facing several barriers. Whether for disciplinary issues, bullying, or receiving services and support, these Latinx mothers were committed in supporting their children. What hindered some of that support was the lack of Spanish-speaking staff. The Spanish-speaking mothers found it difficult to navigate the school system mainly because of language. However, they were motivated to help their children succeed by advocating for special education services and attending CSE meetings. The parents also addressed bullying issues with the school when their child was experiencing difficulties or bothered by another child at school. The parents did not want their children to feel alone or left out. Since the mothers felt emotional support was important, their child's well-being was of utmost importance.

Latinx parents' involvement practices in schools indicated some notable differences and similarities, which did not always align with Epstein's Model. Efforts set forth by the elementary school administration where the Spanish-speaking mothers lived made it difficult for parents to fully participate in two-way communications with their child's school. Translators and translated materials were not always readily available for the Spanish-speaking mothers. This barrier hindered their efforts to participate in PTA meetings, parent coffee talks, and activities held at the school.

Chapter 5 summarizes this research study and highlights a synopsis of Chapter 4. This data gathered shows the similarities and differences in Latinx parents' previous involvement at their children's school.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Chapter 5 summarizes the findings of this qualitative study on Latinx perceptions of parent involvement. The results were based on the analysis of the interviews given by five Latinx parents. There is a summary and overview of the four chapters from this dissertation. Then the findings discuss how Latinx parents perceived their parent involvement in their child's school and at home. The remainder of this chapter provides implications for practice, suggestions for future research, limitations of this study, and the final conclusion.

Summary of the Study

In this dissertation study, I explored five Latinx mothers' perceptions on parent involvement at school and home through face-to-face and Zoom interviews. While much is known about the positive impact of parental involvement on a child's academic success, there is less known about Latinx parents' advocacy efforts in their child's school. Literature has shown that Latinx parents are typically less likely to become engaged in White, middle-class, parental-involvement activities at school. There has been little research as to how and when Latinx parents become involved in their child's education at school, what barriers they face, and how schools respond to their advocacy efforts (Marcon, 1999). Therefore, the purpose of this case study was to fill this gap by understanding why and how bilingual and Spanish-dominant Latinx parents become involved in their child's education.

Overview of the Dissertation

Five chapters are presented in this dissertation study. Chapter 1 introduces the problem, its purpose, and significance of this research study. Next, an overview of the methodology, setting, and participants used in this study were discussed. The chapter concludes by discussing the theoretical framework, purpose, and defining the key terms related to this study. In Chapter 2, there is a review of literature related to the research topic, as well literature connected to the theoretical framework, Joyce Epstein's Six Types of Parent Involvement, which was highlighted and offered insight into how schools should develop school-and-family partnership programs. In Chapter 3, I outlined the methodology used in this qualitative case study by discussing how I recruited parents, collected data, and organized the interview protocol. In Chapter 4, I examined the data, provided visual representation of the three central themes, and explained how each code was developed into themes. In addition, I presented all the findings found related to each theme and research questions. The remainder of this chapter provides a summary of the problem to this research study, a synopsis of the research study, and research questions.

Overview of the Problem

Research on parent involvement in their child's education shows that collaborative relationships, coupled with advocacy efforts made by parents and schools, increases learning, while the lack of parent involvement leads to lower academic achievement (Henderson & Berla, 1994; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014). The rapid growth of culturally and linguistically diverse families across the United States warrants the need to increase different forms of parental involvement activities to align with formal education policies such as Every Student Succeeds Act and Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act, which mandate that schools invite parents to participate in the education of their child (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). It has become increasingly important to understand from Latinx parent perspectives how Latinx parents can most effectively participate in their children's school to increase student academic achievement, enhance student self-esteem, and improves parent perceptions toward schools (Brown, 1989; Pena-Gaviria, 2013; Zarate, 2007).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the family plays an influential role in the child's well-being and academic learning. What parents do at home—whether by assisting with homework, supporting, and advocating for their children—and their ways of engagement can help their children have every opportunity for success in excelling in school. This type of positive impact of family engagement will encourage student success, school improvement, and create a positive attitude toward their future learning (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Latinx parents may have even more influence on their children's educational decisions than parents from other ethnic groups (Behnke et al., 2004; DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006). However, schools continue to struggle and are less effective in engaging Latinx families, especially when they do not speak the native language of their families or newcomers to this country (Auerbach, 2007; DeGaetano, 2007).

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

This study sought to explore Latinx parents' perceptions of their engagement practices with their child's schooling. There has been little attention paid to how Latinx Spanish-speaking versus bilingual parents define parental involvement and their

experiences with advocacy efforts with their child's school. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do Latinx parents define school-based and home-based parent involvement, and how do those understandings differ between bilingual versus Spanish-dominant parents?
 - 1a) How do Latinx parents advocate for their children, and what barriers do they face?
 - 1b) In what ways are Latinx parents' involvement practices in schools aligned with Epstein's Model, and how do they differ?
 - 1c) Is Epstein's Model appropriate to use in schools with Latinx families?

Review of the Methodology

The research questions asked in this study were through a constructivist lens. In this case study, I collected data through semi-structured interviews with each participant. This design allowed me to investigate the multiple perspectives of Latinx perceptions of parent involvement and allowed in-depth views into their experiences of parent involvement at home and school. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), qualitative research is used to better understand "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences." (p. 6). The participants in this study openly spoke about their views, their role, successes, and challenges in participating in their child's school, and advocacy efforts for their children in and out of school. A case study provided the opportunity to view how Latinx parents' involvement practices mirrored and conflicted with the Epstein Model.

Data for this case study were gathered through semi-structured interviews and were specifically administered to Latinx parents of Central American and South American descent whose children attended a predominantly Latinx, low-SES school district on Long Island. After deciding on this district of location, I spoke with the director of the Saturday literacy program at Philip and James College. An overview of the study and a brief introduction of myself was given by the director at the parent orientation in early February 2022. I met with four of the participants in February 2022 and the other participant in March 2022. The participant observations and interviews occurred from February 2022 to March 2022. During each meeting, I took field notes based on my observations to assist in answering the research questions. I made notations of certain Spanish dialects during the interviews. Furthermore, the focus of data collection for my study rests completely on the perceptions of Latinx parents concerning what prompted or prevented parental involvement. Each interview was recorded and transcribed utilizing Rev.com. I analyzed the data simultaneously and continuously during the data-collection process to ensure accurate Spanish translation and find commonalities to answer the research questions.

Discussion of Findings

The data of this study provide valuable insight to the perceptions held by Latinx parents about their involvement in their child's school. In this section, I discuss the major findings in this study and how these contributed to Epstein's Six Type of Parent Involvement. My first finding answered the first research question. Latinx parents defined school-based and home-based parent involvement differently from the traditional Eurocentric ways, and their understandings also differed by bilingual versus Spanish-

dominant parents. The Latinx parents in this study provided moral guidance, monitored their children's homework, supported their child emotionally, and interacted with the school, all while integrating their cultural beliefs in parent-involvement activities. Bilingual families were more present at their child's school, participated more at school-driven activities, and supported their children emotionally and socially. This finding could shine a light on educators to recognize the strength of family and that the term *educación* is more than books and grades for Spanish-dominant parents. *Educación* is consistent with Latinx child-rearing goals. *Educación* and education hold different meanings for this group of Latinx parents. Moral values and raising responsible children were perceived more as their role in educating their children at home instead of handling the actual learning of curriculum. As a result of these differences, Latinx parents are taking on other responsibilities than what the school views as traditional parent involvement.

The second finding answered the second research question. Language was an insurmountable barrier to Latinx parent participation in advocating for their child. There was a fear among the Spanish-speaking families that they would not be understood and a feeling of shame that they did not comprehend what the school was telling them. Difficulties with language exacerbate issues of advocating for their children at CSE meetings and supporting their children's well-being at school. There were no clear and consistent communication channels provided by the schools to empower families. However, in the school area where most White families lived, those schools were better at communicating with families about their child's meetings and progress. On the other hand, the school where Spanish-speaking families lived was not as diligent in getting

information to families in their native language or in a timely manner. Despite these challenges, the families were all supportive of their children and advocating for their children when needed. When their children needed services or supports, all the Latinx parents in this study advocated for their needs. The same held true for the teachers. The parents reported that the teachers were welcoming and communicated with families. These findings can highlight the importance of clear and consistent communication as an important avenue for schools to empower families to engage in their child's school.

The third finding discovered that Latinx parents' involvement practices in schools somewhat aligned with Epstein's Model and differed in other ways. There is no correct way of Latinx parents being involved in their child's school. According to Epstein, the school is still expected to inform parents of effective parenting strategies within the home and school. This did not become apparent in this study. While all the parents viewed parent involvement as providing emotional support, encouraging accountability to do well in and out of school, and instilling family culture, this was done without the school's input. This finding suggests that more culturally relevant translations and training is needed in parent-involvement practices at the schools by the staff.

Findings Related to the Literature

The three major themes of this study highlighted Latinx perceptions of parent involvement in and out of their child's school. The Latinx parents who participated in this study embraced the opportunity to discuss their honest views regarding their experiences with their child's school and the realities of parenting. The results from this study are consistent with prior research (Auerbach, 2007) in that these Latinx Spanish-speaking families were more involved at home than at their child's school. It is possible that Latinx

parents might be less likely to contact their child's teachers or be at the school, given the perception that the teachers are doing their job at school and the parents are doing their job at home (Mapp, 2003).

Latinx families demonstrate leadership skills with their child's school when their children are faced with academic concerns or bullying issues. Latinx parents found other members of the community or other Latinx parents to collaborate with so they can learn how to access services for their children. These personal resources aided in their ability to advocate for their children. Latinx parents are often portrayed as negligent due to language barriers, which undermines the influence Latinx parents have on their children's education and the desire to build relationships with their child's schools in meaningful ways (Freeman & Freeman, 2002). The findings of this study can enhance efforts made by schools to be more inclusive in facilitating relationships among Latinx parents—especially Spanish-speaking parents—to foster greater involvement within the school.

Parent Involvement

Family influence can shape children's educational experiences (Lareau, 1987). As discussed in Chapter 2, the definition of *parent involvement* is confusing and broad, with varying terms used. This is especially true for the families in the present study. My findings suggested that the Spanish-speaking parents tend to have unique perceptions regarding their involvement in the school versus the bilingual parents. Parents with little understanding of the U.S. education system have not attended school in the US, and their limited English proficiency makes participating in their child's school programs difficult. A common theme found in my study was communication. Language was frequently cited as a barrier to directly helping their children with homework for the Spanish-speaking

mothers. This dissertation study found that language was a hindrance in communicating with teachers and participating in school functions.

The Spanish-speaking parents had different ideas from the bilingual parents about how they were involved and what their role was in their children's school. In this study, Latinx parents found that it was important for them to be involved and participate in practices such as monitoring their child's homework, creating time for their children to complete their homework, as well as helping their children understand and complete their work. While the academics were important, the Spanish-speaking families emphasized the importance of their cultural beliefs, responding to their children's behavior and talking with children about moral issues. As mentioned in Chapter 2, these types of involvement activities fail to adequately cover parental involvement of Latinx families in the models used by schools today.

According to Lareau (1994), parent involvement—especially when it comes to homework—could be problematic at home. Some of the mothers in this study expressed distress that they could not help their children with their homework and sought help from their other children or tutors. Through our discussions, it became apparent that the Spanish-speaking mothers were uneasy about their English-language proficiency and qualifications to help their children or be present at their child's school. The Spanish-speaking Latinx parents did not attend PTA meetings or directly help their children with their homework, but they were still involved in their children's lives in demonstrating positive moral values, which was just as important as attending parent-teacher conferences, being a class parent, and signing up for committees. The Spanish-speaking parents may not have a full understanding of how the school system operates but are

involved to the best of their ability. Although the Spanish-dominant mothers spoke with less confidence, they were not less committed in overseeing their child's academic development at home whereas the bilingual parents placed an emphasis of assisting with homework and its completion. The bilingual mothers helped through direct teaching and instilling preparedness to complete all assignments. Both sets of parents were also committed to their children's participation in organized activities, whether school sponsored or private. They viewed this as another form of parental involvement.

Advocacy

Given that most of the Spanish-speaking parents did not receive formal education in the United States, they were unaware of their rights and roles in the special education process. Their lack of full knowledge about how the school system functions and their parental roles at their child's school hindered efforts. The Spanish-speaking parents' hesitation in becoming more involved with their child's school come from their lack of English proficiency. Difficulties with language exacerbated issues for the Spanish-speaking mothers in advocating for their children. As these Latinx parents attempted to improve their advocacy skills—whether by attending their child's CSE meetings or speaking to administration on pressing issues—they were confident enough in their skills to help their children succeed and feel emotionally stable (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005). Despite any language barriers, all the parents in this study shared that they had the desire to advocate for their child.

The Latinx parents reported that delivery of information about services or CSE meetings from schools were impersonal and without adequate notice. As a result, parents felt they could not fully advocate since they did not receive substantive translated

information or translators at their meetings. The systemic barriers prevented these Latinx families from understanding their special education rights. On a positive note, parents reported that they felt welcomed to participate in their child's education by the teachers. This provided comfort to parents and allowed them to be involved at parent-teacher conferences and attend CSE meetings. This finding is in line with Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013), who asserted that developing collaborative relationships with parents and encouraging parent involvement were found to foster parents' sense of efficacy, leading to greater parental involvement and increase their confidence to participate in school-related activities.

Factors That Prevented Parent Participation

The outcomes of this study contradict some of Epstein's six types of parent involvement. Evidenced in this study was that schools frequently communicated to families in English and did not provide information bilingually. The mothers in this study cited systemic barriers to their home-school partnerships, which included cultural mismatches and language differences. The school administrators seemed to assume that Latinx parents already had the knowledge of navigating the special education process, had enough linguistic knowledge to understand how to participate in district-wide events. This is in line with Yosso's (2006) idea that educational institutions often operate under the illusion that there is equity and that Latinx families have equal access to resources or receive the same opportunities to successfully participate, as most White students have.

The five Latinx mothers unanimously stated that participation in their child's homework allowed them to form collaborative bonds with their children and to participate in their child's schooling, even if it was just ensuring it got done. Despite the

various barriers of language, the Spanish-speaking parents expressed eagerness for more homework assistance and informational meetings from the schools. These findings are linked to Epstein's Model (2009) that parents want more information about how they can help their children develop socially, emotionally, and academically. However, the schools were not providing consistent informational sessions as the Epstein Model suggests; therefore, these Spanish-speaking parents were not able to help their children as the English-speaking parents could.

All the parents in the study shared that they were involved in their child's school, but some were discouraged by the opportunities the school offered for engagement. These opportunities were not designed with their needs or interests in mind. The events and activities that were given by the school were announced with short notice and poorly communicated to the Spanish-speaking families in the district. A lack of translators at school meetings and events also discouraged the Spanish-speaking parents from further involvement.

Contribution to Epstein's Model of Parent Involvement

Joyce Epstein's Model of Parent Involvement was used in this study to investigate Latinx Spanish-speaking versus bilingual parents in their perceptions of parent involvement. It also sought to answer if Epstein's Model is appropriate to use in schools with Latinx families. As mentioned in Chapter 2, studies have discussed parental involvement extensively and the schools that use models to implement parental-involvement strategies. However, it has become increasingly evident that schools continue to struggle in trying to increase the parental involvement of Latinx families. What became obvious in my data collection and data analysis was the eagerness from the

Spanish-speaking parents to participate in their child's school. These parents wanted to be an equal partner in their child's learning, except the schools were not making a concerted effort to include them in ways they could easily achieve. It became obvious that the lack of Spanish materials and translators were making it difficult for Latinx families to participate. Even though some of the schools were better at disseminating information in Spanish and English, concrete strategies and consistency were lacking and frustrating to the Latinx mothers in this study. While the Epstein Model encourages schools to communicate with parents, it does not include culturally responsive ways to do so.

The Epstein Model is embraced by many schools, but the strategies suggested are based on school cultures formed from Eurocentric cultural norms. Parental-involvement strategies from this model should consider ethnicity, since it became evident that the Latinx families demonstrated differences in parental involvement than White families in more home-based activities. While the schools in my study were apparently implementing parent-involvement strategies suggested by the Epstein Model, they were not culturally responsive or relevant. The parents in my study were not interested in attending workshops given by the school, since these were primarily in English and culturally different. I suspect that the schools and teachers continue to define parental-involvement activities through more traditional methods that are geared toward inviting parents to school-based activities. The Epstein Model may not capture how Latinx parents want to be involved in their child's school and does not include culturally relevant strategies. This could indicate a need for newer ways of working with Latinx families. Parents reported that parenting classes in Spanish were not common practice at

the school. They also stated that Spanish parent informational sessions were held via Zoom during the Covid-19 shutdown, but those Spanish informational sessions were dissolved when schools resumed in person. I was curious as to why there were not more opportunities for Spanish-dominant families to be involved. There may be a need for schools to involve parents in the decision-making process of what types of classes they would like and find out what their needs are. This approach would align much better with Epstein's Model, since it encourages families to be decision makers.

The term *educación* needs to be redefined by the schools, as they should realize that cultural differences and practices exist. Parental monitoring of homework suggest that these Latinx parents gain knowledge about their children that go beyond just asking their children for information on how to compute a math problem. Rather, these Latinx parents are engaging their children in moral and social development. Relationship-building with their children is important and valued. Latinx parental-involvement activities may not align with the White, middle-class norms of the school personnel. Perhaps schools can increase their awareness of the types of educational supports provided by Latinx families in the home so that they can begin to make changes in their parent-involvement strategies to maximize parent involvement.

I recommend that the Epstein Model be reimagined by including more culturally diverse approaches to working with not only diverse families but also those that are Spanish dominant versus monolingual. Epstein's Model may not fully capture how Latinx parents are or want to participate in their children's school, indicating that new and improved ways of working with Latinx parents are warranted. Schools will need to realize that cultural differences and practices exist among Latinx families. The school's

perceptions and misunderstandings that can occur between teachers and parents can impact parental-involvement practices among Latinx families and their relationships. Schools should reconsider their beliefs about Latinx parental involvement to focus on individual families' strengths and redevelop a more culturally responsive parental involvement plan. I was interested in understanding why the Spanish-speaking parents placed a larger emphasis on moral and social development than the bilingual parents. Since both groups of parents were of Latinx descent, I sought to discover how these parents could become more involved in school. Teachers or social workers could design in-home education, parent education, and community engagement. This could be open to all the Spanish-dominant families across the district.

Surprising Findings

This study had several surprising findings. One of those findings was that all the mothers made it a priority to be home when their children came home from school, whether they worked or were stay-at-home mothers. There was one mother, Eufemia, who decided to quit her job to be available for her children at home. Faced with being torn to work and their lack of finances to accommodate her children at home, she felt her presence at home was more important for all of them. All the mothers were committed to being home to monitor or assist with homework or get their children to organize activities such as sports. Bilingual families tend to have their children involved in more varied activities, and their beliefs differed due to having multiple experiences with school activities. Bilingual families saw sports or drama activities as providing opportunities for their kids. This opportunity to cheer their kids on was also a way to have family time.

Another surprise was how one parent Ramona was not only seen as an advocate for other Latinx mothers but a bridging agent in the community and beyond. She had seen that there was a deficit for Latinx women to grow stronger and use their voices in their community. Being a Latinx bilingual woman, she took advantage of her dual language and education. She could no longer bear to see how Latinx women were not empowered and stifled by the Latinx culture. She organized a Latinx mothers' group for all women to join, regardless of profession or education. She initially focused her training and support groups on how to be involved and collaborate with their child's school. Now she has expanded it to include financial planning, college preparation, building leadership skills, and community organizing. She has made special efforts to include Latinx women from all over Long Island, where she creates social events for them to participate. She is a leader in her community and has an impact on her school's decision making and diversity teams.

The discourse on outreach methods—especially with disseminating information and communication from the different schools—was surprising. Despite the schools being in the same district, they operated in silos. Each school had its own way of communicating with parents. Some of the schools used flyers and robo calls, whereas others used flyers and the school webpage to inform parents. It was noted that as the children moved on to middle school and high school, communication became scarce and so was bilingual staff. The schools zoned in the predominantly Spanish-speaking community was not always as effective in having the notices in Spanish. The school zoned where more Whites lived was better at translated materials. I was not expecting to hear that in a district that is predominantly Latinx and has many native Spanish speakers

that there was a need for schools to translate materials better. According to the parents in my study, the schools' control of appropriate communication continues to limit parent-involvement practices.

Implications for Practice

Throughout this study, I have discovered data that provides a culturally responsive view of parent-involvement practices. Latinx perceptions of their cultural values and familial practices are of central importance in preserving their cultural roots. These cultural and familial values are pivotal for Latinx families that want to develop well-established relationships with their families, community, and better relationships with teachers.

Communication barriers should become a priority in school districts. Eliminating language barriers that can limit access and opportunities for parent involvement in schools to support their child's education should be more inclusive. Language has been identified as a common barrier to effectively involving parents. Providing translators, hiring bilingual staff, and distributing materials in Spanish will help make Latinx parents feel welcome and aware of parent involvement activities at the school. Parent-involvement initiatives geared toward Latinx families need to be interactive and not a doling out of informational materials. These shifts are strongly encouraged based on the perceptions shared by the Latinx mothers of this study.

In addition to focusing on providing Spanish materials and communicating in the parents' native language, districts should ensure that adequate translation services are available during school events and offer different modes of communication between the school and the home of Latinx parents. Having these opportunities for families to be

engaged throughout the school year is important to meeting the needs of Latinx families. Creating these opportunities will engage more Latinx families and others from diverse backgrounds. In a study, Harris and Goodall (2008) challenged the one-size-fits-all approach of parent involvement, since it does not consider the ethnicities or constraints that hinder historically marginalized parents from engaging in their child's school.

Furthermore, relationship building should be a priority implemented by the schools. Relationships among Latinx parents may increase their participation and impact the existing strategies used by the school such as with Ramona. Since the district welcomed ideas by Ramona and encouraged her participation, schools can use parents such as her as bridging agents between the school and Latinx community. Schools could support this work by giving Latinx families space at the school and time to do this work. Through this initiative, parent work groups could be developed to create a sense of ownership within the school. Parent leaders could emerge from these work groups that would perform specific tasks within the schools and be empowered for advocacy.

Recommendations for Further Research

Latinx families play an important role in their child's social and academic development. The parental involvement terms and types of activities Latinx parents took part in are unique from White, middle-class families. The way that these Latinx mothers described *educación* was three dimensional: it included social, behavioral, and moral values. To capitalize on the Latinx definition of parent involvement as a resource, care should be taken to respect different cultures and respective countries to gain better understandings of each parent's perceptions. By building on Latinx perspectives, their home practices, and viewing them as experts of instilling their cultural values to their

children, schools can increase their Latinx parent-involvement activities. Euro-centric parent-involvement activities will need to shift to something broader than maintaining the status quo on how schools define parent involvement and find more ways to include Latinx families. To start, schools should develop culturally responsive and relevant trainings to examine their own biases about Latinx parent involvement and so-called norms (Theoharis & Scanlan, 2015) before building on their family's experiences and strengths. Scanlan and Johnson (2015) found that culturally responsive leaders support and recognize the cultural and linguistic competence of their Latinx families and community. This approach goes beyond a multicultural food day; it respects and values the contributions made by Latinx families. These teacher trainings on Latinx culture and parenting can help staff to engage in more culturally appropriate outreach to Latinx families. According to Delpit (1995), if educators do not have some knowledge of their students' lives outside of paper-and-pencil work, and even outside of their classrooms, then they cannot accurately know their families' strengths and weaknesses. These interventions may be time consuming, so enlisting community organizations to assist schools will prove to be beneficial to help implement Latinx parent-involvement activities.

Collaborative partnerships built on values and shared visions among Latinx parents can lead to improved success for students and their families. Another way in sustaining those relationships would be providing culturally responsive curriculum and instruction trainings to staff in recognizing the importance of including students' cultural backgrounds, language, and experiences into their everyday lessons. Focusing on teaching strategies that are culturally responsive will not be enough to enhance student

learning. Theoharis and Scanlan (2015) suggested that when culturally responsiveness is developed and adopted by reflective educators who have acknowledged their biases and personal views, then those educators will recognize the “wealth of knowledge” their students and families already know culturally, linguistically, and intellectually. This can help them see the impact their student’s culture has on all aspects of learning. Through this process of understanding these differences, educators can use their understandings to create family-engagement strategies that are responsive to their families’ cultural and community backgrounds to strengthen those partnerships. This might prompt educators to explore whether trainings for parents offered in Spanish on leadership, ESL classes, literacy, and the special education process will increase Latinx participation in their schools.

Once school leaders become more culturally responsive, then they can recognize how power is shared with Latinx families beyond the schoolhouse doors and will be able to seek ways to increase Latinx parent involvement in their schools. Briscoe et al. (2003) addressed that administrators who recognize institutional barriers and support families through their interests can help families develop stronger ideas about the importance of advocacy through meaningful partnerships. As Villenas (2005) stated, schools will need to make a commitment to “resituating the dynamics of power and privilege” (p. 276) to create safe spaces for Latinx families’ voices be heard. To attract Latinx families to participate at PTA or join district committees, schools will need to recruit and retain Latinx families in a more proactive way. It will be necessary to make personal outreach, develop Spanish parenting classes, provide trainings on special education, translate materials, hire bilingual staff, include a Spanish outreach teacher to work with Latinx

families outside of school, offer opportunities to build social relationships, and create a welcoming atmosphere (Tractenberg et al., 2020).

When schools create a welcoming school environment and build meaningful relationships with Latinx families and their communities by treating them as partners, parents will be prepared to understand today's classrooms and better advocate for their children. Bryan and Henry (2012) noted that parents of at-risk children understood the need for involvement in their children's education but believed that they lacked the resources and knowledge to help their children. By creating parent support groups or parent-to-parent partnerships, these opportunities can not only impact parent participation but also empower parents to serve as supporters to each other. Naturally through this process, parent leaders can emerge. These parent leaders from the Latinx parent groups could be compared to see how other schools are supporting Latinx family engagement in their child's schooling. Without this support, Latinx parents are more likely to flounder through the educational system, unable to advocate for their children. Future work should promote an active, inclusive engagement by schools to create opportunities for Latinx parents to participate in leadership development, such as Ramona did within the schools. These opportunities include leadership training, ongoing informational sessions on early identification of at-risk students, multicultural events geared toward Latinx families with their input on the events, and joint parent-staff activities to enhance not only school resources but community services as well. There should be additional research regarding the types of workshops teaching Latinx families about the U.S. educational system, advocacy for translation and hiring of bilingual staff, communicating issues that arise from teachers, special education services, and bullying prevention.

Limitations

The methodological limitation was sample size for this case study. I extended invitations to as many Latinx parents that dropped off their child at the Saturday literacy program. Due to Covid-19 limitations and parents' time constraints, it was a challenge recruiting more participants. However, the sample size was sufficient to draw conclusions about the current participants. Another limitation of this case study was that the researcher was employed at the college. This could present a bias regarding familiarity with the community, the school district, and the parents. To address this limitation, I presented the purpose of the study to all participants to communicate that no specific outcomes were expected before the interviews and that I would conduct a thorough analysis of the data. While gathering the data and performing the data analysis, I was aware of any potential bias to avoid reaching any invalidated conclusions.

Merriam (2009) suggested that limitations with case studies could arise from validity and reliability. To avoid this pitfall, I took copious notes and ensured accuracy by having the participants check in on the transcriptions to fully capture their meaning and interpretations. One limitation of this is that parents may have felt uncomfortable correcting me to make edits.

Despite that I am Puerto Rican and identify as a Latinx mother, another potential shortcoming I feared was that the Latinx parents may offer richer information if I shared the same culture. Despite our common knowledge of Spanish, our dialects are different, and I often found myself using some English words to substitute other words. I had to be cautious of Spanish translations to English since dialects differ from region to region and words may lose their true meaning. Since this research study was qualitative in nature

and focused on one group of parents from one community, the results may not be generalizable to other situations or environments (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). However, the information the parents provided could be useful to other schools, if they are looking for ways to increase the involvement of their Latinx parents. Regarding the data-collection process, parents might have been hesitant to share any negative perceptions they had regarding their child's school in fear of retaliation to their child from the teacher or school. However, a disadvantage could have been that I may have unintentionally asked "loaded" questions, interrupted the interviewee, or made assumptions about what they might be saying. Last, this group of Latinx parents already showed a level of involvement by taking their child to the Saturday literacy program.

Conclusion

This study explored Latinx parent perceptions of their involvement at their child's school. Although all the parents were Latinx, there tended to be a difference in Spanish-dominant parents versus bilingual parents in their views of what parent involvement meant to them. If schools do not apply a systematic approach, many Latinx families will feel isolated when attempting to participate in their child's schools. Every and any effort matters.

The parents in this study showed the delicate balance of being respectful, independent, and conscientious. Breaking the cycle of blaming Latinx parents of not being involved or interested in their child's education begins with the closest ties: that's the family, the school and the community. Parent-involvement partnerships can empower Latinx families and help build solid connections with their child's school and community.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval



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Kathleen Maurer Smith, Ph.D.
Dean, Graduate Academic Affairs
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DATE: January 21, 2022

TO: Yvonne Sinisgalli
FROM: Molloy College IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1852293-1] Mi Familia es mi Fuerza. Latinx Perceptions of Parent Involvement

REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: January 21, 2022

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Molloy College IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations. However, exempt research activities are subject to the same human subject protections and ethical standards as outlined in the Belmont Report. **You may proceed with your project.**

This acknowledgement expires within three years- unless there is a change to the protocol.

Though this protocol does not require annual IRB review, the IRB requires an annual report of your exempt protocol (Expedited and Exempt Research Protocol Annual Report Form) which is available on the IRB webpage.

If there is a proposed change to the protocol, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to inform the Molloy College IRB of any requested changes before implementation. A change in the research may change the project from EXEMPT status and requires prior communication with the IRB.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact Patricia Eckardt at 516-323-3711 or peckardt@molloy.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

Patricia Eckardt, Ph.D., RN, FAAN

- 1 - Generated on IRBNet

Chair, Molloy College Institutional Review Board

This letter has been issued in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Molloy College IRB's records

Appendix B: Interview Questions for Parents

1. Tell me a little about yourself and your family? Spanish- ¿Contarme un poco sobre ti y tu familia?
2. How long have you been in the country? Spanish- ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas en el Estados Unidos?
3. How long have you been in this school district? Spanish- ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas en este distrito escolar?
4. What opportunities do you have to be involved with your child's school? Spanish- ¿Qué oportunidades tiene para participar en la escuela de su hijo?
5. What do you think parent involvement means? Spanish- ¿Qué cree que significa la participación de los padres?
6. In your opinion, what is the most important thing that you can do to help your child academically? Spanish- En su opinión, ¿qué es lo más importante que puede hacer para ayudar académicamente a su hijo?
7. Have you visited your child's school this year? Why? Spanish- ¿Ha visitado la escuela de su hijo este año? ¿por qué?
8. Tell me how you see yourself participating in the school district as a parent. Spanish- Dígame cómo se ve a sí mismo participando en el distrito escolar como padre de familia.

9. What are the types of involvement you engage with your child at home? At school? Spanish- ¿Cuáles son los tipos de participación/actividades que usted hace con su hijo en casa? ¿En la escuela?
10. Can you describe the types of contact you have had with your child's school. With school educators? Spanish- ¿Puede describir los tipos de contacto que ha tenido con la escuela de su hijo? ¿Con educadores escolares?
11. Have you felt welcomed to participate in your child's school? Explain. Spanish- ¿Se ha sentido bienvenido a participar en la escuela de su hijo? Explica.
12. Have you been able to participate in your child's school activities, if so, what kind? Spanish- ¿Ha podido participar en las actividades escolares de su hijo, si es así, de qué tipo?
13. When participating at your child's school what motivated your decision to do so? What were the reasons? Spanish- Cuando participa en la escuela de su hijo, ¿qué motivó su decisión de hacerlo? ¿Cuáles fueron las razones?
14. What are the things you like most about your child's school? The least? Spanish- ¿Cuáles son las cosas que más le gustan de la escuela de su hijo? ¿Lo menos?
15. Can you describe a few instances where you have advocated for your child at their school? Were there any obstacles? Spanish- ¿Puede describir algunos casos en los que ha defendido a su hijo en su escuela? ¿Hubo obstáculos?
16. What are your perceptions of parent involvement at home? At school? Do they differ? Or same? Spanish- ¿Cuáles son sus percepciones sobre la participación de los padres en el hogar? ¿En la escuela? ¿Difieren? O lo mismo?

