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## **Intergenerational Family Learning Programs: Stories of Latinx, Immigrant Families and Their Journeys to and through Higher Education**

Monica Ramos

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INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY LEARNING PROGRAMS: STORIES OF LATINX,  
IMMIGRANT FAMILIES AND THEIR JOURNEYS TO AND THROUGH HIGHER  
EDUCATION

Mónica Haydeé Ramos  
EDD in Teaching and Learning  
Major: Curriculum, Advocacy and Policy

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements of  
Doctor of Education  
in the National College of Education

National College of Education

National Louis University

June 2020



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INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY LEARNING PROGRAMS:  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This research presents the stories of three Latinx families who participated in an intergenerational family program. I endeavored to understand their experiences navigating the American system of education and their immigrant stories. Their narratives revealed significant details that can serve as integral elements in the development of an intergenerational learning curriculum based on culture, language, and traditions, and that steps away from the assumptions that perpetrate the deficit-based narratives about Latino families and higher education. Their hopes provide points for further research and advocacy. In this qualitative study, I collected data using semi-structured interviews, including documents and artifacts. The most relevant literature includes intergenerational learning, lifelong learning, culturally relevant pedagogy, and funds of knowledge. Moreover, I suggested national and international intergenerational family education programs. In closing, I present the reader with my various identities and my reflections as part of the validity of the study as I am a researcher of color investigating an issue that affects People of Color.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since the beginning of my higher education journey, I have been fortunate to have professors who inspired me and who believed in me. In my undergraduate studies, Dr. Luis Ceja and Professor Rayo Valles were so special to me. Dr. Luis Ceja's love for literature and philosophy will always stay with me. Professor Rayo Valles showed me what engaging classrooms looked like. Her mastery of pedagogy and her assertiveness are something I continue to aspire to. During my graduate studies, I treasured Dr. Sweeney's conversations about authentic writing, evoking students' voices. In my doctoral studies, I continued to be very fortunate. I want to thank my professors in the Curriculum, Advocacy, and Policy program, especially Dr. Sara Efron. I would have not gone this far without her guidance and patience. You have a special place in my heart. I am forever grateful for her wisdom and kindness. My profound appreciation to Dr. Terry Smith and Dr. Carlos Azcoitia. Thank you for never doubting me and for making me feel that I could do this. I am forever grateful to all of you for teachings and your suggestions for this work. Thank you, Dr. Efron, Dr. Smith, and Dr. Azcoitia for pushing me to embrace and amplify my voice. Additionally, I want to extend my gratitude to the families who made this research possible, and to all the families and students who have crossed my path during my career. You are my inspiration. Thank you for allowing me to walk along with you on your educational journey. Lastly, I cannot ignore the violence and oppression perpetrated against People of Color in the United States. With this work, I want to honor brothers and sisters of color unjustly taken from us by acts of violence motivated by racial hatred. Along with that, I acknowledge the grief caused by the global Covid-19 pandemic.

## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

My son, Aidan Sebastian. You are the light of my eyes, the fire of my heart, the source of my energy, my confidant, and the most beautiful gift God has given me. Thank you for your patience during these long five years.

My mother, Maria del Socorro. You always wanted the best for me and my brother. Ever since my teen years, I envisioned this day. This accomplishment was inspired by your principles of a well-done job and persistence.

My husband, Martin. You are a good man and a noble soul. I appreciate your support and cheers. Thank you for your endless words of encouragement.

My dearest friend, Leo. I treasure your friendship. I deeply appreciate your support during the hardest times in this journey. Thank you for those many days you listened to me when I most needed to be listened to. You are like a brother to me; you are an example of compassion and hard work.

My grandmother, Doña Leonor Reyes. You are my inspiration; your essence is what makes this work so meaningful. You will always live in my heart. I wish you could see me now. Grandma, I am the first in the family with the highest academic degree. I made it, Grandma!, ¡Lo logré!. ¡Lo logramos! We did it!

Abuelita Leonor this is for you, for our ancestors, and for our generations to come.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### **Introduction**

Intergenerational programs are vehicles for the purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and younger generations (UNESCO, 2000). The implementation of intergenerational family programs that educate and empower young Latinx to enroll, stay, and graduate in higher education is imperative. Low college attainment starts early among minoritized students, as data clearly shows. Particularly, statistics from the Illinois Interactive Report Card of a K-8 public school located in a primarily Latino neighborhood demonstrate the lag Latino students are already experiencing in reading. According to this report, 62% of the 819 Latino students from that school are considered at risk. These numbers are upsetting and present an opaque future for these students. Similarly, an article published by Rado (2015) for the Chicago Tribune points out that high-poverty schools in Chicago and downstate had the lowest ACT scores in the state. Some had less than 5 percent of students considered ready for college classes.

The low degree completion among Latinx, immigrant, first-generation students revolves around the limited information on college readiness. A central strategy in the resolution of this issue may rest in intergenerational learning programs that foster lifelong learning and prepare Latino families for the transition to higher education. Research by Kaushal (2014); Chase-Lansdale & Brooks-Gunn (2014) present information on the significance of intergenerational, culturally relevant, and bilingual family programs starting in pre-k and through high school. According to this research, intergenerational family programs may be of great relevance to families' journeys to and through higher education.

Furthermore, I believe intergenerational family learning programs that consider lifelong learning and are culturally relevant support the connections to students' learning, culture, and background. At the same time, these might help the learner stay motivated, healthier, and productive. Therefore, family learning programs particularly for Latino immigrant communities must consider the importance of offering families a culturally relevant curriculum and resources in their own language. These elements might provide a successful transition from high school to college as parents may relate to the information, the resources, and the stories shared. This way, the disconnect between families and higher education may be reduced.

Research by Tornatzky, Cutler and Lee (2002) demonstrates that college knowledge of immigrant parents is not optimal. The average level of college knowledge among Latino parents is relatively low. Thus, it is reasonable to assert that the involvement and understanding of families in the pathway to college is essential. In Viramontes and Lopez's (2012) study conducted among 40 immigrant families from Mexico, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras, most parents expressed lack of familiarity with the American educational system, culture and language. Particularly, undocumented families revealed their frustration with college access. Unfortunately, to this day, the understanding of the higher education system among Latino families is still prevalent. The article "All Together: the Role of Latino Families in Higher Education" by Deborah A. Santiago, published in 2011 by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* mentions that Latino families frequently lack knowledge of their different financial-aid options, do not realize the educational expectations that college demands, and do not recognize the distinctions among different types of colleges.

This information presents an important issue that should be addressed. Exploring the concern of low college understanding among Latino families earlier in the education system

might lessen families' confusion about transitioning their children from high school to college. Additionally, an intergenerational, lifelong learning approach may provide a stronger base for advocacy and development of comprehensive policies that support adequate funding for intergenerational, culturally relevant family programs, with an emphasis on college readiness. Policies, government, education, and community are accountable to assist in the fulfillment of the opportunity gap among immigrant students. The vulnerability of the Latino population will continue to escalate if the problem of college attainment for Latinx students remains unsolved. For instance, Flores, López and Radford (2017) in their report *Facts on U.S. Latinos, 2015 Statistical portrait of Hispanics in the United States*, for the Pew Research Center, accounted for a 21.9% of Latino families living in poverty in the United States. This data calls the urgent attention of policymakers, education leaders and administrators, community, and government in support of first-generation Latinx students and their families. The development of lifelong learning families through intergenerational family programs might be a missing piece for better livelihoods, dropout prevention, and the key to the college attainment of Latinx.

Furthermore, new policies around the preparation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner in the United States have recognized these challenges. In the report, *A Blueprint for Reform (2010)*, former President Barack Obama promoted a world-class education that leads to a more equal, fair, and just society. One of the top priorities of this report is to support college- and career-ready standards that prepare college- and career-ready students with the premise that “every student should graduate from high school ready for college and a career, regardless of their income, race, ethnic or language background, or disability status” (p. 3). However, this task is not going to be easy to accomplish without comprehensive policies that emphasize the inclusion of

intergenerational family programs in the schools, as part of their parent leadership and engagement programming.

There is an urgent need for policies that advocate for families of Color and financially support intergenerational family programs in the school curriculum and that take a culturally relevant approach to college readiness. Roderick, Nagaoka, and Coca (2009) highlight the importance of improving college access and readiness for low-income and minority students in urban high schools. Even though college enrollment among African Americans and Latinx has increased, the representation of students earning four-year college degrees is not significant. The inclusion of college readiness in intergenerational learning programs could possibly serve as a compass and result in higher rates of college attainment among young Latinx.

For that reason, educators and the many stakeholders in the education system must understand the foundations of the educational experiences of immigrant, first-generation college students and their families. Moreover, they must honor their funds of knowledge (cultural, linguistic, communal, historical) and provide multiple lifelong learning opportunities throughout the education pathway with the support of the community. With this idea in mind, families' funds of knowledge and lifelong learning are the links for continuous progress in the educational system. The beginning of education should be supported with the understanding that learning is lifelong, life-wide, begins at their home, at the intimacy of the family's cultural knowledge, and in their own language. A lifelong approach to learning can continue preparing families to navigate and understand this foreign and complex education system that ultimately will become a friend or a foe. Learning in the family dynamics must be at the center, and it should be fostered from birth to the end of life.

In essence, the road to and through higher education must be strengthened by intergenerational learning programs with culturally relevant and lifelong learning approaches. In my opinion, advocacy efforts in support of family learning programs that focus on the navigation of the education system for the college attainment of youth Latinx are long overdue.

Currently, the inclusion of lifelong learning in intergenerational family programs supporting Latino immigrant families presents a space for improvement. The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Office of College and Career Success offers college exploration programs; however, these programs do not include the intergenerational family component. Comparably, CPS in partnership with Digital Youth Network and Chicago City of Learning hosts Parent University in thirteen different sites across the city, but it is not clear if this program considers college readiness in its curriculum. It is noted that one of their guiding principles is to provide opportunities for parents and community to be active participants in the education of the students.

To sum up, in conjunction with lifelong learning, college readiness is important to the advancement of the Latinx community in the United States. These two elements integrated into intergenerational learning might provide a solution to the lack of college attainment among Latinx youth.

### **Teaching and Learning in the Family: My Lifelong Learning Story**

My desire to advocate for intergenerational family learning programming and its implementation across the curriculum in the PreK-16 education system, particularly in low-income, immigrant, Latino communities, comes from my own experience. As a first-generation graduate and professional, the teachings of my mother and grandmother have been instrumental

to my own learning. Not only that, but their support throughout my journey has also been my motivation. Even though they did not have ample experiences in the formal education, nor the higher education systems, their presence and involvement in my education were crucial to my success. Most importantly, their engagement in lifelong learning paved the way towards my education achievement. My personal experience, in many ways, reflects the role of families in advancing their children's education. It also echoes the drive required in overcoming the obstacles that may prevent achieving such an education.

However, the journey has not been easy. It has come with struggles, plenty of them. Here, I intend to share the challenges, frustrations, and the positive practices that impacted my success to find common ground with my readers, and others who would want to become allies, and supporters of the integral success of Latinx students and their families.

There are special memories I hold dear to my heart, that inspire my work with families and that root me in the understanding of the struggles of my people. I recall the presence of my mother in the parent-teacher conferences; sitting by my side when homework was confusing; the proud face of my grandmother in the school festivals. I remember my mother reading the Sunday newspaper every weekend.

My grandmother, Doña Leonor Reyes, despite her low formal education, made the biggest impact on my formation. She introduced me and my little brother, to our first books. Every afternoon, we walked with her to the community next to ours on the outskirts of Guadalajara, Mexico to rent old books, comic books, and magazines. Even though her literacy skills were low, she read the stories to us. She was an amazing storyteller, an exceptional teacher, and a loving lifelong learner. She spread her magic among other kids in my neighborhood. She

sat in her old chair on the dusty street outside our door, and only minutes later the kids came buzzing with excitement. We knew that when she sat there, she would tell us the stories of her life, her tales of survival during the *Cristero War*, and all the urban legends she learned from her own mother.

Despite the conditions we lived in, inequities, and the circumstances that limited my abilities to achieve my full potential, my mother's and grandmother's emphasis on education paved the way that allowed me to continue my educational journey. The teachings, life lessons, and good and bad experiences of these two generations were influential in my determination to pursue education as a way to break free from a system of oppression and poverty. Many years passed, and I continued moving up the ladder in my education.

My first step into higher education was possible thanks to a tuition waiver and hard work. After four years, I completed a bachelor's degree at the *Universidad Del Valle de Atemajac*, a prestigious, private university in Guadalajara, Mexico. I was a professional, but in my country, that did not guarantee work stability and further professional opportunities. This seemed to be the end of my educational journey. After completing my degree and after years of disillusion, I left Mexico in the pursuit of professional advancement and better job opportunities. My decision was definitive, I was going north.

### **My Uneven Journey through Higher Education in a Foreign Land**

My life changed drastically from one day to another. I found myself at the intersection of excitement, anxiety, and fear. As I stepped out of the Chicago international airport, on a chilly March day in 2005, my thoughts blurred with uncertainties and waves of panic. I did not know

what to expect, or if I would be successful in the pursuit of my detailed plans. My only conviction was that I had made the right choice.

My identity, the definition of my persona, changed abruptly. I was an immigrant, a foreigner, an alien—in more legal terms. The definition of my new self did not tame my purpose. Since the very first day of my arrival, I had a clear notion of what I desired to do. I was determined to accomplish what I promised myself and my family back in my country. Ultimately, I was going to attain a master's degree and fully live the *American Dream*. To start, I needed to go to a university, but as a recent immigrant, it was not easy to navigate the college education system. Nor did I know which university to choose.

Consequently, I eagerly started looking for universities that offered master's degrees. I was very certain that the universities I had identified were my best options. After asking for information on how to enroll and listening to the financial aid officers, I did not believe what I was hearing. Those findings were shocking. Money, and a lot of it, became the subject in question. In Mexico, public education is nearly free, it represents a low cost to the students who are selected to attend public universities. I arrived at the admissions office under the impression that this would be the case in the United States; to my surprise, even in public universities, students financed their education.

I sat static in front of the financial aid officer. I was looking back and forth at the numbers and the stratospheric amounts of money that I had to earn to further my studies. At that moment, my *American Dream* crumbled. I saw it dripping away from my fingers, like the freshwater of a swift and whirly river. I felt beaten down in a fraction of a millisecond. Then I

took a deep breath and thanked the admissions representative. I grabbed my purse and walked away from the office and the university's building. My head was low, not looking back.

At that moment, I did not have accurate information and facts about higher education. I did not have a clear understanding of the higher education system. I did not know my options. I was clueless about my financial aid possibilities. Nonetheless, that was not important. The only important thing for me was to convince myself of the impossible. My desire to attain a master's degree was not going to happen. My mind was running, searching for possibilities, and at the same time wrestling with the fact that I did not have the money to pay now, or ever. I did not have the means to come up with a little fortune for the studies I knew were going to solidify my financial situation, my family's well-being, and my professional advancement. Those studies that would move me forward in the pursuit of happiness in the land I had chosen as my new home.

Sanacore and Palumbo (2016) point out that too many low-income students, often first-generation students, find themselves amid confusion when meeting with admissions counselors. They assist with the completion of loan applications, but disregard clarification on the very significant difference between being accepted to college and graduating from college. Often, they do not provide a clear explanation of the repayment of those student loans.

For many families, the case of attaining a further degree is not even in the picture. I was lucky enough to have been awarded a scholarship to sustain my studies at a private university in Guadalajara. I knew that a master's degree would provide me with the tools to find good employment, but also would help in my integration to my new country. These were great reasons to persist in my idea, but I did not have a clue on how to even start. This is the case for many immigrant families who are strangers to the American higher education system: families from

minoritized backgrounds, immigrants, refugees, low-income, with limited formal education or who did not attend college, and whose sons and daughters are the first ones to pursue a college or university degree.

Finally, and after many confusions and conversations with admissions counselors, I enrolled in a master's program at a progressive, medium-sized university in Chicago. Even though I found what I was looking for, the decision to enroll was very difficult to make. I hesitated many times before matriculating. I feared to receive a call letting me know that I did not qualify for any assistance. And I was afraid that I would not be able to pay all the loans I had just agreed to pay. I remember how hard my hand trembled as I signed my first award letter. I was overcome by preoccupation.

At the end of 18 months, I concluded my studies in Adult Education. I was ready to improve my family's way of life. After graduation, I started my first official job. I much desired to grow in the higher education field, and that is where I rooted my professional intentions. I started working in a private, not-for-profit university in Chicago. In my functions as a student coach, I was able to support the academic success of minority, low-income, first-generation students. During the years I worked with them, I witnessed their everyday struggle to survive higher education. The college passageway was obviously challenging from beginning to end. The socio-economic, cultural and emotional factors, weak academic preparation, language barriers, the absence of role models, and the lack of information made the road to higher education winding and extremely taxing for these students.

The road in the education continuum begins with a rocky start for vulnerable families and disoriented newcomers, who like me, embrace and see this country as their new home, a new

beginning, a start to a brighter future. The experiences of Latinx students throughout their higher education journey attest to the need for examining the roots of the challenges they encounter throughout their education pathway, in particular towards higher education.

Based on my experiences as a Mexican, immigrant, educator, and first-generation college graduate, these barriers could be weakened if the roots of the issues Latinx students face in the American system of education are deeply examined and understood. There is an urgency to bring culturally relevant approaches that honor and amplify the funds of knowledge of families. These funds of knowledge are bodies of knowledge, cultural ways, life experiences, and assets of the immigrant families (Moll, et al., 2005). Funds of knowledge can serve as foundations to the holistic success of first-generation students. In other words, to effectively support the integral success of Latinx students in higher education, we must provide culturally responsive educational and leadership opportunities to their families, parents, and guardians. These opportunities should consider families' plethora of knowledge, cultural ways, language, and familial capital. With those beliefs, I explore the significance of this study for the educational field, for Latino parents, Latinx students, and educators.

### **Problem Statement**

My interest in this dissertation research focuses on exploring narratives related to the navigation of the American education system and college completion amongst families from Latino descent who participated in family learning programs.

## **Purpose Statement**

In this narrative inquiry, I capture the stories of Latino families, former participants in intergenerational family programs, and whose children attained a higher education degree, are graduating from college, and are considering college. I seek to understand their journeys navigating the American system of education and their experiences in higher education.

## **Definition of Key Concepts**

### **Intergenerational Learning**

Various terms address intergenerational learning. These include family literacy, family learning, family literacy and learning, community learning, or two-generation education (UNESCO, 2017). It is important to note that intergenerational learning intersects with all those elements.

Intergenerational or two-generation learning encourages cooperation among different generations. As Boström and Schmidt-Hertha (2017) define:

Intergenerational learning is more than just a facet of intergenerational relationships. On the one side, it enables the intergenerational transmission of knowledge, skills, competencies, attitudes, and habits in both directions—from the younger generations to the older ones and the other way around. On the other side, intergenerational learning opens up space for generations to learn more about each other, to understand the perspectives of other generations without necessarily adopting them. Therefore, intergenerational learning is related to intergenerational relationships in different ways as relationships of generations form these learning environments and the interaction of learners, but also, it can be changed through learning processes (p. 1).

## **Lifelong Learning**

Lifelong learning is a fundamental concept in this study. Historically, the Faure Report *Learning to Be* of 1972 and the Delors Report of 1996, *Learning: The Treasure Within* revolutionized the concept and principles of lifelong learning. For the relevance of this report and for the purpose of this study, I am using the lifelong learning concept referred to in the *Belém Framework for Action* (2010) which defines it as “an organizing principle of all forms of education based on inclusive, emancipatory, humanistic and democratic values. It considers its role to be critical in addressing global educational issues and challenges” (p. 5).

This conceptualization of lifelong learning is further developed by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL). In its technical notes, UIL states that lifelong learning is rooted in the integration of learning and living, covering lifelong (cradle to grave) and life-wide (formal, non-formal and informal) learning for people of all ages, delivered and undertaken through a variety of modalities and meeting a wide range of learning needs and demands. This definition remarks that lifelong learning does not limit its range. Lifelong learning extends beyond formal education to non-formal and informal learning for young people and adult citizens (UNESCO Technical Notes, (n.d)).

Along with the previous concepts, college readiness must be defined here, as it is considered of great importance in the completion of college. According to Conley (2012), college readiness usually means the ability to complete a wide range of general education courses. Furthermore, it encompasses other non-academic characteristics such as ethical conduct, ownership of one’s behavior, initiative, resilience, collaborative teamwork, motivation, and self-regulation skills.

In addition to the concepts above and as central notions to this research, it is important to define other terms that the reader will often see noted throughout this work. These terms conceptualize the overarching ideas on the first-generation students and graduates, including the Latino and Latinx meanings.

### **First-Generation College Students**

First-generation college students are the first ones in their family to attend community college or university and whose parents did not attend higher education (Bui, 2002; Gofen, 2009; Pascarella, Pierson, & Wolniak, 2004), and often confront more barriers to and through college (Gibbons & Woodside, 2014). Once the students attain a bachelor's degree, they are considered first-generation graduates. The first-generation graduates might also continue to further study in higher education.

More particular to the ethnic background of the population in this study, I use two terms: Latino or Latinx. Used here, Latino refers to the parents and Latinx to the students or graduates. For the parents and families, I use the term Latino as it is more inclusive to the people of Latin American countries. It has been used in the colloquial and political language, more so during the 2000 election, the Democratic candidate Al Gore used this term (Alcoff, 2005). Also, Latino and Hispanic are terms used interchangeably in some conversations; however, Hispanic is more common in New Mexico, much of Texas, and the south-east excluding California (Alcoff, 2005).

I consider the term Latino because it is more inclusive of Latin American people, as stated before, and for its implications on the decolonization argument, a characteristic the term Hispanic lacks. This surged from the idea of Spain, the country of the conquerors, whose language and culture dominated Latin America (Granados, 2000). Instead, I consider Alcoff's

(2005) explanation. Her description reflects the historical and current realities of Latinos in the U.S. She states that “Latinos are those peoples who have been constituted largely in and through colonialism that has not yet left us, unlike the previous colonialism of Spain, which has a historical but less important present-day salience in the contemporary political economy of the western hemisphere” (p. 402). The connections she made are relevant to my understanding of the immigrant Latino community, its history, multiple identities, and realities. This definition is the most appropriate for the context of this study.

Furthermore, the term Latinx is most recent. It predominates in the conversations among younger generations. It resulted from a discourse on male and female gender identities and their exclusivity. Morales (2018) states that “Latinx was coined so as not to privilege gender” (p. 306). The term steps away from the sexual binary, and it embraces the Latinx intersectionality. Morales continues to highlight how the Latinx term, use, and acceptance “is emblematic of the nature of Latinx identity construction” (p. 306) and its continuous redefinition. For the purpose of this research, I use the term Latinx to refer to the youth. In their narratives, I identify them by their preferred pronouns: she, he, or they.

## **Historical and Theoretical Frameworks**

### **History of Lifelong and Intergenerational Learning**

To provide a better understanding of the origins of the intergenerational and lifelong learning conceptualizations, diving into their historic roots is essential. Lifelong learning encompasses the basis of this study; therefore, a glance at its historical relevance is fundamental. Equally important is the notion of intergenerational learning and its history in the educational

platform. In this section, after presenting a background on the history of lifelong learning, I hone into intergenerational learning history.

### ***Lifelong Learning***

Originally, the concept of *lifelong learning* emerged from the ancient Greeks. Bosco and Pushkin (2007) write that “Plato and Aristotle described a process of learning for philosophers which extended over a lifetime” (p. 3). Aristotle states that the “*paideia*” essentially embedded the idea of the development of dispositions and capabilities for the individual to continue learning. He also mentions that for the Greek philosophers, lifelong learning was exclusive to the elite for philosophic speculative inquiry. For Plato, lifelong learning was important and a way to prepare the young for abstract thinking. Since then, Bosco and Pushkin assert, lifelong learning has been considered by educational reformers and thinkers such as Dewey and Freire.

As a theoretical concept, lifelong learning derived from Danish writer, poet, and philosopher Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872) and his Danish Folk School Model (Corrigan, 2012). The Danish Folk School reference only serves as background information to the understanding of the historical origin of the lifelong learning approach.

The Danish Folk School emerged from Grundtvig’s opposition to conservative ideas of education and culture. He endeavored to establish a school that ensured the promotion of lifelong learning, personal growth and a sense of cultural identity (Corrigan, 2012). According to Fain (1971), Grundtvig’s folk high school was to be a school for life. This new concept defied impersonal institutions. Fain noted that the folk high school teachers refrained from lectures and used songs and 'free talks' with a 'poetic-historical' approach permeating all subjects, there

weren't any tests and students could choose the topics of their interests. Also, the school was open to all adults who wished to participate.

### ***Basil Yeaxlee and the New Lifelong Learning Era in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century***

Fast forward to the early 1900s, the concept of lifelong learning resonated slowly once more. The reemergence of the discourse on lifelong learning spurred in Europe from the works of Basil Yeaxlee and Eduard Lindeman. Yeaxlee's beliefs highlighted the idea of including learning and living as educational paradigms. These two elements were dependent on each other and essential in the holistic educational opportunities of the individual. His claim for lifelong learning education was that:

The case for lifelong learning education rests upon the nature and needs of the human personality in such a way that no individual can rightly be regarded as outside its scope, the social reasons for fostering it are as powerful as the personal (as cited in Jarvis, 2009, p. 2).

For Yeaxlee, lifelong learning meant a holistic understanding of learning and living. According to Cross-Durrant (1987), "his idea of lifelong learning education rested upon integrating learning and living, both horizontally across work, leisure, and community 'life spaces; and vertically from virtually the cradle to the grave'" (as cited in Jarvis, 2001, p. 32). Basil Yeaxlee, a British academician, deeply involved in adult education and religion, was the first one to generate the concept of lifelong learning. Yeaxlee's ideas in his publication *Lifelong Education: A sketch of the range and significance of the adult education movement* (1929) presents the immanent connection between life and education. These ideas are the foundations of lifelong learning education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cross-Durrant (1987) mentions that his

publication “represents the first formal attempt [in] this century to combine the whole of the educational enterprise under a set of guiding principles with each phase of agency (formal, informal and non-formal) enjoying equal esteem” (as cited in Jarvis, 2001, p. 32).

In 1970, the concept of Lifelong Learning was offered for discussion during the United Nations International Education Year. It was two years later that UNESCO coined and clarified the term, foreseen with the potential to challenge existing educational principles. Meanwhile, the United States renewed conversations on lifelong learning were soon disregarded. These dialogues were more influential at an international level. To this day, though interest in lifelong learning continues to be restored, failure to support concrete policy on lifelong learning in the United States is imminent (Young & Rosenberg, 2006).

### ***Intergenerational Learning***

With respect to intergenerational learning, this has always existed in our society. Hatton-Yeo and Ohsako (2000) mention that intergenerational learning has been rooted historically and traditionally into the familial and patriarchal relationships of different cultures. Like lifelong learning, *intergenerational learning* is not a new concept. It gained more exposure in recent years with the work of Newman and Hatton-Yeo (2008) and Hatton-Yeo and Ohsako (2000).

For the purpose of this study, I explore the idea of lifelong learning and its weaving with intergenerational learning among immigrant, Latino communities in the U.S. To begin with, I want to point out the initial efforts that supported immigrant communities in the US and their crucial role in fostering intergenerational and lifelong learning. Moreover, the settlement house movement and its comprehensive approach to the needs of the immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

offered them the basic tools for education. Following, I include the educational efforts of the Settlement Houses starting with the Hull House in Chicago.

### ***Immigrant Families in the Hull House Settlement from 1889 to 1935***

In the United States, the late 19th century was represented by deep economic, cultural, and demographic changes (Scheuer, 1985). Immigrants were coming into the country mostly from Europe. According to Papademetriou (1988), “approximately 34 million of the 38 million immigrants who entered the United States between 1801 and 1935 were Europeans” (p. 313). Also, he states that farmers came to the cities looking for jobs because of the expansion of industrialization. Poverty related issues, health problems, and children's lack of schooling were common.

During that time, middle class educated social reformers influenced by the idea of the Toynbee Hall in London established about a hundred social settlements across the United States. Their mission was to aid people in need. Individuals living in the settlements received the basic services and depended on them for wellbeing and upward mobility (Beck, 1976). One of the most recognized social settlements was created on Chicago’s west side.

This settlement was Hull House. It was founded in September of 1889 by Jane Addams, Ellen Gates Starr, and Mary Keyser. It established a safe place for the disenfranchised and European immigrant groups. It also provided social services and advocacy on behalf of the poor, homeless immigrants, and people with substance dependencies (Dieser, 2005). Addams saw the needs these populations had due to mass migration and industrialization of the time. Hull House provided not only shelter but also educational programs that integrated the lifelong learning idea to help immigrants and the poor to improve their quality of life. Daynes and Longo (2004) claim

that “Addams argued that education, like service, needed to be seen broadly, relationally, and publicly” (p. 7). As a result, the settlement house provided various activities aimed to develop the individual and the community. It was a safe place for the poor and working people to discuss their problems, ideas, and foster their traditions.

Scheuer (1985) describes the purpose of the settlement houses as “an outpost of culture and learning, as well as a community center; a place where the men, women, and children on slum districts could come for education, recreation, or advice, and a meeting place for local organizations” (para.10). He adds, the settlement was a neutral place, offering itself as a forum for discussion between workers and capitalists, citizens and police, parents and teachers, etc., and as a source of aid to individuals.

Overall, the idea of the settlement, Scheuer claims, was to be that of an extended family, and the binding force for the community (para. 16). As a result, the learning interactions in the settlement incorporated the idea of intergenerational learning not only in the settlement bounds but in the community. This idea was not just innovative, but prominent. It validated the collective knowledge of the immigrant communities. The settlement served Bohemians, Italians, Poles, Russians, Greeks, and Arabs in Chicago. These immigrants strived to survive in the city and adjust to a foreign land. As Jane Addams reflected in her essay, “The Objective Value of a Social Settlement”(n.d.), these immigrants were trying to vainly adjust their peasant life to the life of a large city. She recognized the importance of supporting and elevating these communities with more education as a way for their subsistence. She was firm to the idea that “the more of scholarship, the more of linguistic attainment, the more of beautiful surroundings a Settlement among them can command, the more it can do for them” (p. 3). Further, in that essay, she described the life of these immigrants in Hull House. Her examples clearly show the

implementation of intergenerational and lifelong learning approaches in the teaching and learning of these immigrants. “The evenings were equally divided between men and women. The children came in the afternoons. It is difficult to describe the social evenings, and there is much social life going on constantly which cannot be tabulated” (p. 5).

In the same way, the settlement house fostered the relationships between college students, professors, and residents. I consider this to be an effort to include intergenerational learning, along with the inclusion of educational services for the participants to continue learning. These activities developed further opportunities in the lifelong learning continuum. Activities related immigrants and participants in social life with education, both, of equal importance in the development as a person and as a member of a community. Here a clear example of this dynamic:

The educational effort of Hull House always has been held by the residents to be subordinate to its social life, and, as it were, a part of it. What is now known as the College Extension course, a series of lectures and classes held in the evening on the general plan of University Extension had its origin in an informal club which, during the first winter, read "Romola" with the original residents. (Addams, n.d., p. 5)

According to Scheuer (1985), settlement houses were established in cities of the Northeast of the United States due to large immigrant populations during the critical years between the World Wars. In Richmond, VA, for example, the Neighborhood House, a non-resident settlement house provided services to immigrants so that they could adjust to life in America. The settlement house offered clubs and classes, sports, religious services, and medical care (Paul, 2017). The Baden Street Settlement in Rochester served immigrant women and

provided them with instruction on sewing, gardening, and cooking, in addition to primary education. The settlement also offered a nursery and health assistance (Social Welfare History Project, n.d.). And in New York City, The University Settlement located in Lower East Side of Manhattan served low-income and immigrant populations starting in 1886. The efforts of the settlement houses supported the adaptation, civic engagement, health, and education of people of foreign descent. A clear example of the significance of this movement is Hull House in Chicago. Because of Hull House's influence and its impact, residents advanced significant projects and legislation for the benefit of the most vulnerable populations. These pioneering efforts demonstrate that Jane Addams' work considered the impact of education at a macro level. She was a trailblazer for the lifelong learning approach in the United States and a vanguard in early intergenerational family curricula.

### **Critical Theory**

Critical Theory initiated the Institute for Social Research in Germany in 1923. The inaugural lecture by philosopher Max Horkheimer prompted the beginnings of the Frankfurt School (How, 2003). For Horkheimer, critical theory is based on three principles: it must be explanatory, practical, and normative, all at the same time.

Therefore, exploring what is wrong with current social reality, identifying the actors to change it, and providing explicit norms for criticism and achievable, practical goals for social transformation (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2005). These criteria provide a guide to the inquiry in this work that goes further into the incorporation of a more inclusive approach in the examination of the challenge presented here. The theory leading the exploration and conversations around the issue in this document is Critical Race Theory, specifically Latino/a Critical Theory or LaCrit. A brief overview of these frameworks is presented below.

## **Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) surged primarily from the work of legal scholars of color in the '70s to address social justice and racial oppression in the United States. However, for some scholars, the origin of CRT is traced back to thinkers such as W.E.B DuBois, Frederick Douglas, and César Chávez. Elenes and Delgado Bernal (2010) stated that the Black Power and Chicano Movements from 1960 and 1970 are considered predecessors of CRT (as cited in Murillo et al. 2010 p. 64). Certainly, CRT led the ignition of scholarship and activism that centered their efforts on “studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p.2). However, the diversity of these issues originated from other related frameworks such as Critical Race Feminism (FemCrit), Asia Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit), and Latino/a Critical Race Theory (LaCrit).

### **Latino Critical Theory (LaCrit)**

Latino Critical Theory (LaCrit) originated in Critical Race Theory (CRT) due to the limitations it posed regarding the absence of the intersectionality of class, race, gender, sexuality, language, immigration status, and other issues important to Latinx (Elenes & Delgado Bernal, 2010 as cited in Murillo, et al, 2010 p. 66). Solórzano and Bernal (2001) reiterate this as they state that “LatCrit is a theory that elucidates Latinas/Latinos’ multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression” (p. 312). In the same way, Yosso (2006) adds that LaCrit pursues to empower the marginalized by examining the racialized layers comprising the Chicana/o, Latina/o/x experiences within and beyond the U.S. borders. In particular, LaCrit examines “racialized layers of subordination based

on immigration status, sexuality, culture, language, phenotype, accent, and surname” (Yosso, 2006, p. 7).

Moreover, Yosso offers the exploration of the counterstories in the majoritarian stories within Latinx education. A counter-story calls attention to “the biased and subjective formulae of the majoritarian story” (p. 4). In this fashion, counter stories defy the perceptions of Latino parents not caring about their children education or the assertion that “if Chicana/o students perform poorly in school, then their parents probably do not “value” education enough to inculcate academic excellence in their children” (p. 9). This preconception of Latino parents must be demystified. I suggest culturally relevant programs focused on intergenerational learning. Intergenerational family programs can offer opportunities to enhance the educational support of their children, facilitate their way to and through the education pathway, and provide opportunities for the educational advancement of parents and guardians.

In essence, figure 1.1 presents my theoretical framework. The foundations are provided by Critical Theory and Critical Race Theory. The ideas of Paulo Freire and John Dewey in parallel with the Community Cultural Wealth and Counter-Narratives build a robust structure toward the pinnacle that holds all these theories together. Latino Critical Theory (LaCrit) provides the core of my research.

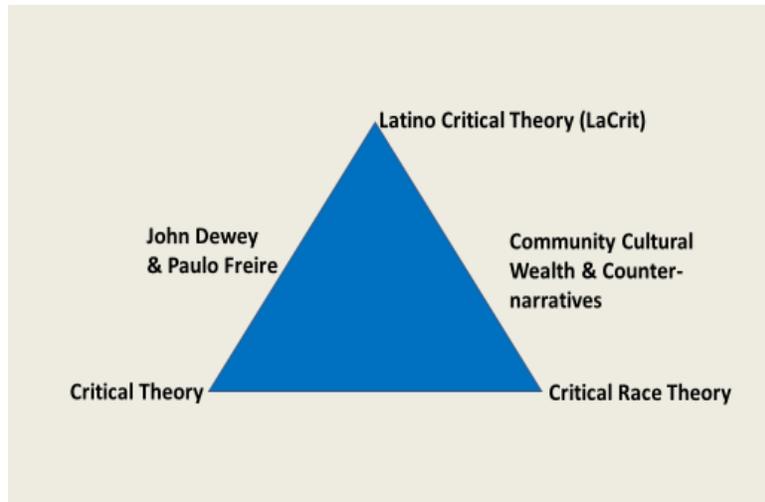


Figure 1.1 My Theoretical Framework

## Research Questions

This research considers the attainment of a higher education degree as an important piece in the understanding of the education system. With this, I do not suggest that the attainment of a higher education degree is the only way of achieving wellness or success. In other words, higher education is not exclusive to success or progress. For me, higher education represents a dream achieved. For instance, when I was in middle school I remember looking at a picture of the Mexican education system. It illustrated the different levels of education on a ladder. I remember observing the illustration for a long time and imagining the feeling of achieving each one of those and reaching the highest point. Since then, that image has been lingering in my mind, a vision of sorts. That image has been my compass and motivation. I want to learn from stories and experiences of families of first-generation college students and graduates because my story resonates with theirs in many ways. I am a first-generation college graduate.

Therefore, I believe that the successful navigation of the U.S. higher education system might represent an increase in college attainment among Latinxs. Delving deeper into this

notion, my research intends to illustrate the stories of low-income, immigrant Latino families, and first-generation students and college graduates.

In this research, I gathered the stories of families who participated in an intergenerational family program between 2013 and 2016 in Chicago. These families were enrolled in public schools and lived in representative urban Latino communities. I included the stories of three families who were former participants in the program, as well as their first-generation college children. I was part of the program in an administrative and facilitator capacity. I was significantly involved in the programs since its creation. I was supportive of the program, its objectives, and the collaboration with the community organization. I was as the director of the program in the last year but served in a leadership capacity the years prior. My involvement allowed me to foster good relationships with the participants and their children. These relationships and interactions facilitated the identification of families for this research. I acknowledge that after the program, I continued to have some communication with these families. I am grateful for their support in this research.

The following questions guide this dissertation.

Central question:

*What can we learn from Latino families who participated in intergenerational family programs about navigating the American education system for their children's attainment of higher education?*

### Subquestions:

- How can intergenerational learning programs support Latino families in navigating the American education system for their children's attainment of higher education?
- What is the role of intergenerational learning programs in the attainment of higher education of Latinx, first-generation students?
- What are the experiences that informed parents' lifelong learning journey and how do these inform their children's own lifelong learning journey?

### **Significance of the Study**

The Latino population in the United States is a prevalent ethnic minority in contemporary times. Currently, the Latino community in the United States represents 17.6% of the nation's population. There are 56.6 million Latinos with a growth projection of 119 million by 2060; this will represent 28.6% of the total population of the United States by that year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Additional data from the U.S. Census Bureau's (2016) "Profile America Facts for Features Report" accounts for 16.2 million Latino families. Indeed, the representation of Latino families in the United States is significant.

Nationally, the percentage of Latinos in public schools increased from 19 to 25 percent in a period of 10 years, from the fall of 2004 to 2014, and is projected to reach 29% by 2026. This represents an increase from 12.8 million in 2014 to 14.9 million in 2026 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). In the same fashion, Chicago's Latino community grew significantly. It is home to 2,153,000 Latinos. This represents 17% of Illinois' population, as

reported by the Pew Research Center (2018). Specifically, in the Chicago Public Schools, Latinx children and youth make up 46% of the demographics. The total enrollment of Latinxs in K-12 education is 524,000 children, representing 24% of the general student population (Krogstad, 2014).

As has been noted, the representation of Latino families in the education system is rapidly increasing. These families have children throughout the education pipeline, from early childhood education to higher education, stumbling upon the challenges of a complex education system. In this regard, a study done by Tornatzky, Cutler, and Lee (2002) shows that many Latino parents are unprepared to support their children in their journey to higher or continuing education. For instance, Tornatzky et al. relate that many parents of first-generation Latino students who are ready to enter college, experience confusion regarding the pathway that needs to be taken to access higher studies. This lack of resources to assist their children is not because Latino parents do not care about their children's education. In fact, studies by Viramontes Anguiano, Salinas and Garcia (2010) and Viramontes Anguiano and Lopez (2012) demonstrated that Latino parents hold high respect and care about the education of their children.

The current data indicate that Latinos are significantly behind in the attainment of college degrees. This underlines that a higher number of first-generation Latino heritage youth must graduate. Therefore, educators and policymakers should include Latino parents in this process. Based on their commitment, we may assume that college education attainment may allow these families and communities to live a better quality of life. In this regard, these studies show that educating families about the importance of continuous learning, and the intersection between this process and college readiness, may cause a reduction in the percentage of Latinx students who drop out of high school and do not complete university or community college.

Across the nation, Latinx represented a 10% drop out rate in 2016 with about 648,000 youth ages 18 to 24 (Gamlich, 2017). This number might not seem alarming, but it is very significant when compared to other dropout rates of 4.6% for Whites and 6.5% for Blacks (National Center of Education Statistics, 2017). By the same token, college completion among Latinxs ages 25 to 29 accounts only for 15% of bachelor's degree attainment or higher (Krogstad, 2016). Additionally, only 1.9 percent of Latinxs between 25 to 34 years old are pursuing post-baccalaureate studies (Fry, 2002).

Figure 1.2. indicates that Latinos are significantly behind in the attainment of college degrees. The data leaves a clear message. The educational progress of Latinos has not kept the pace with the growth of the community, out of 100 students who enter elementary school only 10 or 11 graduate from college. The data clearly shows that a higher number of first-generation Latino heritage youth must graduate.

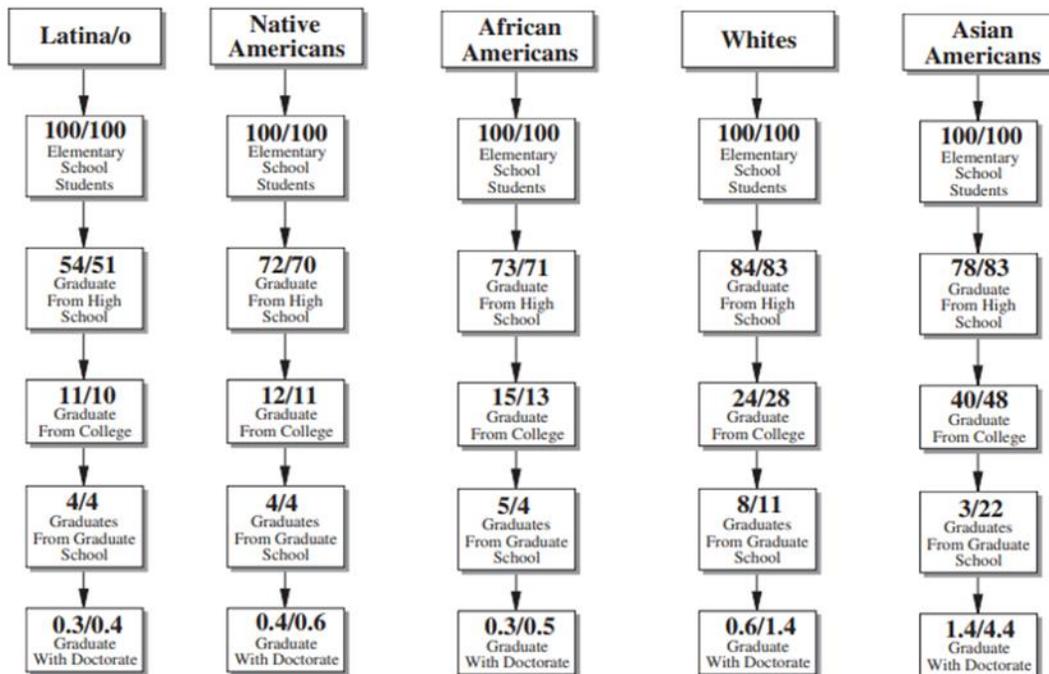


Figure 1.2. The U.S. educational pipeline, by race/ethnicity and gender, 2000. From Huber, L.P., Huidor, O/ Malagon, M.C., Sanchez, G., & Solorzano, D.G. (2006, March) Falling through the cracks: Critical transitions in the

Latina/o educational pipeline. 2006 Latina/o Education Summit Report. CSRC Research Report. Number 7. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center. Cited from Hurtado, A., Cervantes, K., and Eccleston, M., (2009) *Infinite Possibilities, Many Obstacles: Language, Culture, Identity, and Latina/o Educational Achievement*, pg. 285 in Murillo, J. E. G., Villenas, S., & Trinidad, G. R. (Eds.). (2009). *Handbook of Latinos and Education : Theory, research, and practice*.

With the intention of responding to the educational demands of the increasing Latino population, supporting lifelong learning families might be the key to the advancement of the Latino community in the United States. Schools have the responsibility to advance vulnerable communities; therefore, they should create ways to foster lifelong learning. One of those first steps might be adjusting the ways in which they reach Latino families. Furthermore, schools need to understand the communities of color they serve. Research by Quijano and Daoud (2006) found that many Latino parents felt excluded from the school community. These researchers suggest that their “involvement should be customized to specific families and their community and the specialized schooling needs of their children” (p. 258).

Parents are usually the first educators in a child’s life. Just as most parents want a good education for their children, in the home and school, most Latino families consider their role essential in “ensuring that their children have food, clothing, and shelter and that they are socialized into the norms and expectations of the family” (Chrispeel & Rivero, 2001, p. 122).

Furthermore, I believe that schools should provide Latino parents with ample opportunities to engage in the school in different ways, going beyond parent conferences and cultural nights. The integration of Latino parents in the school curriculum through parent engagement programs using an intergenerational learning approach, and supported by a culturally relevant curriculum, might empower parents, providing them with resources and strategies that would add to the support they already give their children at home. As a result of

these interactions, parents and children might engage in an interactive circle of teaching and learning, critical thinking, and strengthening family connections. The integration of intergenerational learning in the school curriculum might be an equalizer for Latino families. Programs that encourage parents to continue learning might set a premise towards breaking the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage and poverty in the Latino community which in the year 2010 represented more than 25% of households living below the poverty line (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018)

### **Summary of Chapter One**

Chapter I introduced the focus of this study and its significance to the educational field. Additionally, it presents background information on Latino demographics in the U.S. and its growth projection, current higher education data, and a suggestion on how to support the completion of a college of Latinx youth. Here, I intend to illustrate the Latino landscape making a connection between the increment in population and the need of providing relevant supports so that the Latino families further their education, in particular, that they are equipped with the tools necessary to support the new generations in their path to higher education attainment. In this respect, I propose that intergenerational family programs, based on lifelong learning and cultural relevance, may provide a solid framework for the advancement of Latinx in higher education.

In addition, a personal narrative presents the connection to intergenerational and lifelong learning in my education path, and my experiences navigating higher education as a newcomer and first-generation college graduate.

Moreover, a historical perspective on the intergenerational efforts and lifelong learning discourse offers an opportunity to explore these concepts and efforts. The historical overview

illustrates the influence of Basil Yeaxlee and the lifelong learning understanding in Europe, and the work of Jane Addams with European immigrant families in the United States. These pioneers share their efforts towards a lifelong learning approach to education and the social advancement of vulnerable communities. For Jane Addams in particular, the development of immigrant families and her approach to intergenerational learning as a strategy to support the success of immigrant families in their new country.

A compilation of relevant terms is also presented. They are intended to provide context and show their meaning to the reader.

To conclude, I provide an overview of Critical Theory, Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latino/a Critical Theory (LaCrit). The theoretical frameworks that support this work will be presented in more detail in chapter two of the dissertation.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Literature Review**

The literature review section of this research explores Latinx college completion and the structure of intergenerational programs in the United States. In addition, I analyze successful international intergenerational family programs, especially those focused on immigrant or refugee families. The information collected from these examples might provide best practices and further ideas on the implementation of intergenerational family programs for Latino families. Moreover, data on international conversations on lifelong learning is included. This information is significant to this work as it provides an ample view of the relevance of this topic globally.

I include a historical overview of the Latino struggle in the U.S. particularly from the Chicano, Chicana Movement between 1960 and 1980, and a present-day exploration of race and the Latino experience in the Trump Era, as hegemonic and adverse rhetoric, is currently used to belittle and demonize the Latino community. The historical reference intends to provide context to the Latino presence in the U.S and its contributions. The nowadays rhetoric outspread by the current administration would be contrasted with the counterstories approach to defying the predominant majoritarian story.

The pillars supporting the theoretical framework of this research are Critical Theory, Critical Race Theory, and Latino Critical Theory (LaCrit) enlightened by the philosophies of John Dewey and Paulo Freire. These lines of thought provide this research with an approach rooted in progressive thoughts, as they reflect and exemplify the struggles of vulnerable groups, in this case, the immigrant Latino family. I use Latino Critical Theory (LaCrit), in particular, Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth model. This illustrates different forms of capital the

Latino community possesses and their relation to the higher education experience of Latinx, including the expectations, readiness, and completion of a degree. Therefore, it is without a doubt that since this work examines the interaction between generations in the lifelong learning process, it is crucial to reference the general concept of family —with a focus on the Latino immigrant family. In the same way, it is fundamental to explore an intergenerational family learning perspective considering language, funds of knowledge, and a culturally relevant approach to intergenerational family programs.

My review of the literature would be remiss if it did not consider the juxtaposition of intergenerational learning programs, lifelong learning, and college attainment among low income, immigrant, first-generation, Latino families. I consider these elements essential in the creation of family programs that support the navigation of the American system of education so that more Latinx thrive in the pathway to and through higher education.

### **Philosophical Roots (Paulo Freire & John Dewey)**

The theoretical framework of this work is based on Critical Theory and Latino Critical Theory enriched by the ideas of Paulo Freire in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), and John Dewey in *My Pedagogic Creed* (1897) and *Democracy in Education* (1916).

Freire's progressive ideas provide the foundations of Critical Theory in the U.S., as well as Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Latina Critical Theory (LaCrit). They serve as the source of the theoretical framework of this work. Dewey's progressive thinking influenced many American Critical Theorists. As discussed later in this chapter, as an educator and a member of a marginalized community, Freire's and Dewey's perspectives align with my experience. From my standpoint as a researcher, the context from which they conceptualize the dynamics of education,

and the understandings of the struggles of minoritized communities, serve as the lenses of analysis of intergenerational, lifelong learning, and immigrant Latino communities in education.

First of all, Dewey's idea that "education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living" fits well with the concept of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning encompasses life-long and life-wide learning. It outspreads formal to informal education for all people regardless of age. It is a process of life. Along with lifelong learning, the importance of intergenerational learning for educational success and higher education attainment of Latinx, Dewey (1938) appeals before schools to nurture the learning originated in the home. He expresses that "school life should grow gradually out of the home life; that it should take up and continue the activities with which the child is already familiar in the home" (p. 35). This understanding honors the knowledge children build at home and values the parent participation in children's learning. Schools should foster the interactions and interchange of learning experiences among different generations. Dewey's conceptualization of democracy and education includes that "intellectual opportunities are accessible to all on equitable and easy terms" (p. 293).

The inclusion of Latino families in the understanding and process of education with a lifelong learning approach is included in this understanding. He believed that "the home is the form of social life in which the child has been nurtured and in connection with which he has had his moral training". In his view, the home is a social necessity in the education of the child. This statement includes intergenerational learning from a social and value-based standpoint.

Paulo Freire's innovative ways in the support of literacy development of his community in Brazil have placed him as a foremost intellectual of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He gained recognition early in his work and his writings; as stated in Schugurensky (2011), he was celebrated as the

greatest living educator who fought for social justice and transformation. Kirkendall (2010) says that “he sought to transform educational practices that reinforced the status quo and demonstrated a belief that knowledge was something that was deposited in inert students and that intended to “domesticate” them” (p. 2). He adds that “Freire wanted to create questioning, critical, active adults” (p. 2).

I, too, think that Freire’s intention of the raising of consciousness as a vehicle to critical thinking and empowerment is what makes his approach to learning and education very relevant, especially among vulnerable communities. The experiences he had growing up enduring poverty and the challenges that came with it cultivated “a deep sense of solidarity and human respect and helped [him] develop a critical and humanistic perception of the world” (Schugurensky, 2011 p. 14). I believe this is what makes Freire relatable to vulnerable communities and what is more interesting is the fact that he sees beyond the norm. For instance, Freire’s approach to literacy is not only based on the fact of reading and writing but the awareness about the dualism of power and oppression. He was concerned with social justice and critical thinking.

Additionally, the idea of liberation is essential to Freire’s work. He reminds us that the path to liberation is not an easy one but encourages us to follow it as it is fueled by hope. He pictures this process as childbirth. For me, the idea of liberation of marginalized communities has been excruciatingly painful before and after Freire’s times. The search for liberation through education continues to be a hard journey. For example, Solórzano and Bernal (2001) elucidate the stories of students of color placing their voices at the forefront of their research claiming that “although students of color are holders and creators of knowledge, they often feel as if their histories, experiences, cultures, and languages are devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within formal educational settings” (p.106). An important step to the process of liberation is recognizing

the knowledge minoritized families bring to the teaching and learning process. Educators should provide safe counter spaces so that families feel empowered to embrace their knowledges. The inclusion of a culturally responsive pedagogy approach is pertinent in this research.

The works of Delpit (2006) and Ladson-Billings (1995) are inspired by Freirean ideas. According to Ladson-Billings (1995), culturally relevant teaching requires that students maintain some cultural integrity as well as academic excellence (p. 160). In addition, she considers three criteria in which for culturally relevant pedagogy is based upon: (a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order (p. 160).

Therefore, intergenerational family programs that integrate cultural understanding, are supported by teachers who understand the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy, utilize students' culture, and encourage the use of the mother tongue in the family's learning as a meaningful tool for learning. Intergenerational family programs are necessary for the advancement of the Latino community and crucial in the academic support of first-generation college students and future graduates. Conversely, the education system – more so teachers, education administrators at the school and district level, and policymakers at the federal level– must exercise true solidarity in the quest to the liberation of communities of color implementing culturally relevant approaches.

Culturally relevant ways value the funds of knowledge and strengthen solidarity through education. Freire points out that this element of solidarity is vital to the transformation of the oppressed.

He defines true solidarity with the oppressed:

When [the oppressor] stops regarding the oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice, cheated in the sale of their labor— when he stops making pious, sentimental, and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love. True solidarity is found only in the plenitude of this act of love, in its existentiality, in its praxis (p. 50).

The pedagogy of the oppressed is relevant to the understanding of the dynamics between the lack of funds to implement culturally relevant programs in education that support Latino families and the first-generation of college graduates. Particularly, the pedagogy of the oppressed identifies the challenges of the Latino community from its human and libertarian perspective.

Freire defines two stages in this pedagogy of liberation. “In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation” (p. 54). Ever since and before Latino families migrated to the United States, they have been concerned with the success and education of their children (Ceja, 2004; Matos, 2015; Solórzano, 1992; Solórzano, 1995; Valencia & Black, 2002).

In the second stage, he considers the oppression ceases in existence and allows for perpetual liberation. It is important to mention that Freire considers that “in both stages, it is always through action in depth that the culture of domination is culturally confronted” (p. 54). The insight of this second stage in the realm of this research is the implementation of an intergenerational learning program for Latino families, in addition to confronting the culture of domination by advocating for funding for intergenerational family learning programs. The theoretical support for these philosophical stances is grounded by Critical Theory. They served

as a basis for the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy, which will later be presented, as it is relevant to this work.

The Freirean approach to this research provides another analytical dimension to the advocacy of culturally relevant programs in support of the intergenerational, lifelong learning of immigrant Latino families. Freire's considerable understandings of systems of power are relevant to challenge the lack of comprehensive, culturally relevant intergenerational programs that support the navigation of Latino families in the education pathway from early childhood to higher education.

### **Critical Theory**

According to Bronner (2011), Critical Theory (CT) was built upon Socrates' ideas and his questioning of the status quo. "He suggested long-standing beliefs to rational scrutiny and speculated about concerns that projected beyond the existing order" (p. 1). The author mentions that Critical Theory continues its evolution influenced by many thinkers such as Kant, Hegel and Marcuse. Bronner states that Kant contributed thoughts on the prospects of freedom and reality. Similarly, Hegel added his insights on consciousness, essence and existence. And Marcuse inserted his ideas on the nature of Reason (How, 2003).

It is noted that Critical Theory was conceived from Marxism, but not so much paying attention to its economic determinism. Its theorists were focused on critical method over systematic claims, alienation and reification, its complex relationship with the ideas of Enlightenment, utopia, ideology, and the anti-deformation of the human. As Geuss (1981) states, "critical theories aim at emancipation and enlightenment, at making agents aware of hidden

coercion and putting them in a position to determine where their true interests lie” (p. 55). The sum of these complexities of themes established the core of Critical Theory (Bronner, 2011).

It is apparent that since its foundation, CT was concerned with the critical evaluation of the way things had become, the way they are, and the way they would become (How, 2003). CT challenges the status quo as “it refuses to identify freedom with any institutional arrangement or fixed system of thought” (Bronner, 2011, p. 1).

Karl Korsch and Georg Lukács established the tradition of Critical Theory at the Institute for Social Research, better known as the Frankfurt School, in 1923 (How, 2003). Held (1980) mentions that the Institute was established with the financial support of Felix Weil, a Marxist and the wealthy son of a merchant. This funding provided considerable autonomy from the University of Frankfurt to which the Institute was officially attached.

After its inception, the Institute was first led by Carl Grunberg considered the founder of Austro-Marxism. As a result, “Marxism was made the inspiration and theoretical basis of the Institute’s programme” (How, 2003 p. 29). However, the ideas of Grunberg and precepts for the social explanation based on the economy were not observed by the central figures of Critical Theory. In 1929, Grunberg retired from the Institute which was passed on to Max Horkheimer in 1930. Horkheimer brought together prominent thinkers such as Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse and Franz Leopold Neumann. He strongly supported the work of Friedrich Pollock and Leo Lowenthal who were already part of the Institute (How, 2003).

Unlike Grunberg, Horkheimer looked into discussing the roles of theory and social research from a more radical approach, historically and theoretically. He advocated for a “dialectical penetration” and the reintegration of disciplines encouraging interdisciplinarity. His thinking is the basis of critical theory. It elucidated the relation to social reality as a dialectical

process (How, 2003). The Institute flourished under Horkheimer's direction, but the Nazi movement started getting stronger. According to the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* after 1933 it was forced to temporarily move to Geneva, Switzerland and eventually closed its doors in Europe. With the rise of the Nazis in Germany, in 1935, the Institute emigrated to the United States. Columbia University in New York hosted it. Once established, "the *Institut für Sozialforschung* entered its period of greatest productivity" (Jay, 1996, p. 43). The Institute took up its focus on problems of authority, defying the status quo. This led to the development of Critical Theory which resulted "partly in response to the failure of traditional Marxism to explain the reluctance of the proletariat to fulfill its historical role" (Jay, 1996, p. 111).

In 1970, the second generation of Critical Theorists with the ideas of Jürgen Habermas "turned global, influencing methodological approaches in other European academic contexts and disciplines" (The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, The Frankfurt School and Critical Theory, para. 3). During this time, the Frankfurt School "embraced the research agenda of Critical Theory and significantly helped its development in American universities starting at the New School for Social Research in New York" (para. 3).

The Frankfurt School's presence and influence in higher education in the '70s along with the movements that developed in that decade are essential to the branching of this philosophy. In this study, the line of Critical Theory and its relationships between intergenerational and lifelong learning are significant in the exploration of issues of inequity among Latino families and the success of their children in higher education. Therefore, I believe that the base of the Critical Theory provides a strong foundation.

### ***Critical Theory Approach to Intergenerational and Lifelong Learning***

Critical Theory was coined by Max Horkheimer in 1937 to explain the work and approach of the Frankfurt School, and to make a distinction between the systematic traditional theory and critical theory. Foley et al. (2015) state that “critical theory seeks to take up the subjectivity of individuals and their experiences in a world complicated by capital, reproduction, and irrationality that cannot be wholly represented in numbers or pure logic” (p. 113). Accordingly, the essence of Critical Theory is to expose what it is at stake and reflect upon it. Critical theory is interested in knowing the reasons why society became unequal, unjust and uncaring (Buchanan, 2010).

### **Critical Race Theory**

Delgado and Stefancic (2017) recount the historical foundations of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Derrick Bell, Allan Freeman, and Richard Delgado are identified as the forefathers of the Critical Race Theory movement (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). They denote that CRT originated in the legal Critical Race movement in the early 1970s. It is based on the ideas of European philosophers and theorists such as Antonio Gramsci, Michael Foucault and Jacques Derrida.

In the U.S., critical theory was influenced by the ideas of Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglas, W.E.B. DuBois, César Chávez, and Martin Luther King Jr. Some of the most important movements included The Black Power and the Chicano movements of the '60s and '70s, and the Civil Rights movement. Scholarship and activism were protruding, the liberal legal scholars led discussions about civil rights and wrote the counter legal scholarship. All of these events prompted the development of a new theory: Critical Race Theory.

It is clear that CRT resulted from the actions and scholarship of activists that engaged in the transformation and study of the relationships among race, racism, and power. Critical Race Theory (CRT) surged from the schools of law as a way to deconstruct the laws and racialized concepts in the legal system and society (Bernal, 2002; Crenshaw, 2010; Yosso, 2005, 2006) and the realization that many of the gains from the civil rights movement in the past decade were stalled and being rolled back (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993).

In particular, CRT surged from a splinter in Critical Theory and the Black vs. White binary. However, other identities and representations of People of Color were not included. The result of this critique outset identity centered theories. People holding multiple identities felt as if their stories were being silenced and disregarded (Yosso, 2005). The groundbreaking approach that resulted from these diverse experiences gave way to “new theories and strategies [that] were needed to combat the subtler forms of racism that were gaining ground” (Delgado et al., 2017, p. 4).

Critical Theory and LaCrit stem from the need to defy the status quo. Also, I coincide with the notion that CRT and LaCrit complement each other as “both frameworks view racism as endemic to U.S. society” (Elenes & Delgado, 2010, p. 65). Similarly, as scholars from both perspectives agree, I, too think that “providing a space for and utilizing the knowledge of marginalized people is vital for theory, practice and social transformation” (p. 65). The approach to the analysis of issues of inequality from a critical theory standpoint provides a strong perspective to my research. My goals are to examine the stories of Latino families. I plan to investigate the interactions between intergenerational learning, lifelong learning, and first-generation higher education attainment.

The stories of the families in this study are suited to be analyzed from a Latino Critical Race Theory (LaCrit). Bernal (2002) considers that Latino Critical Race Theory apprises the multiple Latinx identities and addresses intersectionality considering multiple forms of oppression. With this understanding, LaCrit might allow for deeper insights into the relationships between intergenerational learning, lifelong learning, and the attainment of higher education among first-generation Latinx. Hence, Latino Critical Theory (LaCrit) guides this study, and it is explained below.

### **Latino Critical Theory**

It is important to outline the origins of the theoretical framework guiding this work. This study involves an epistemological perspective and research paradigm informed by Critical Theory (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2016; Tate 1997), deepening into the understanding of the immigrant family story through the lenses of Latino Critical Theory (Anzaldúa, 2012; Yosso, 2006). Furthermore, this work would be careless if it did not allude to the origins of Latino Critical Race theory.

Originally, Critical Race Theory only considered the binary between White and Black experiences (Yosso, 2006). The lack of inclusion in its dual scope provoked the addition of other socially and racially marginalized histories, stories and communities incorporating theories such as FemCrit, TribalCrit, AsianCrit, WhiteCrit and LaCrit.

The Latina and Latino Critical Legal Theory, Inc. (LatCrit) recount in their website that LatCrit arose from debates on Critical Race Theory in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since then, legal scholars and practitioners have discussed the lack of representation of Latina/o concerns and voices in legal discourse and social policy. Finally, in 1995, during the Colloquium on

Latinas/os and Critical Race Theory held in Puerto Rico, LaCrit was born as a new theory. Francisco Valdes, Berta Esperanza Hernandez-Truyol, George Martinez, and Margaret E. Montoya were among the founders of this theory. LaCrit's foci were to (1) to develop a critical, activist and inter-disciplinary discourse on law and policy towards Latinas/os, and (2) to foster both the development of coalitional theory and practice as well as the accessibility of this knowledge to agents of social and legal transformation. Therefore, LatCrit theorists seek to promote social justice awareness and activism by centering Latinas/os" multiple internal diversities and to situate Latinas/os in larger inter-group frameworks, both domestically and globally (Latina and Latino Critical Legal Theory, Inc. [LatCrit], n.d.).

Adding to that, Latina/Latino critical theory (LatCrit) balances CRT by considering other scopes to critical race analysis, such as addressing issues often ignored by critical race theorists (Delgado, 2002); for instance, matters such as immigration status, language, culture, gender, and sexuality and in the case of this study higher education attainment. Yosso's supports that "LaCrit brought a Chicana/o, Latina/o consciousness to CRT" (p. 6).

To conclude, Delgado (2002) provides a dynamic conceptualization of Latino critical race theory. She defines it as "LaCrit is a theory that elucidates Latinas/Latinos' multidimensional identities and can address the intersectionality of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression (p. 108).

### ***Stories of Latino Resistance: The Chicano, Chicana Movement (1960-1980)***

The Latino struggle in the United States is written in our memories and hearts. It is recited in our poems, painted in our murals, sung in our songs, and told to our younger

generations. It is tattooed in many of our bodies. A clear example of this sentiment is reflected in this paragraph:

Latina/o youths along with their families, communities, and advocate scholars, have long experience and tried to explain the challenges of education and schooling in the United States. They have told stories, created songs, provided *consejos* (advice), and conducted research with narratives and numbers to explain how they have succeeded and how schools have failed them (Villenas & Foley as cited in Murillo et al, 2010 p. 3)

This struggle fuels this dissertation. As a Latina, first-generation graduate, and soon part of the 0.5% Latinx with a doctoral degree in the United States (Excelencia in Education, 2019), I am proud to add my voice to that of Latinx scholars sharing my experience. Because it is taxing trying to figure out a strange system of education that seems to forget about immigrants who want to belong and partake in the education continuum. Nonetheless, the challenges that Latinx face in education are aside from the multiple struggles that Latinx in the United States experience. They go back as far as the Spanish Colonization and the complex relationship with the United States. Even though these obstacles are rooted in our history, they are everpresent today in the form of forced assimilation and acculturation, labor-related violence, microaggressions, and racism. Here, I illustrate some of those struggles as they relate to the history of Latinx in the United States, particularly in the Chicano, Chicana Movement period because “only by understanding history can we truly engage the present and build a better future” (Chavez, 2013 p. 519).

I center this conversation on events relevant to the social justice and the equity strive of Latinos beginning with the Chicano, Chicana Movement amid the Vietnam and Civil Rights Era

in the 1960s, the demand of better education for students of color in the 1970's, and continuing with the 1980s with immigration issues that are prevalent in the political and social atmospheres of the country.

The mid-1960's mark the dawn of the Chicano and Chicana Movement (CCM). The movement was fueled by young activists, community organizers, farmers, and artists. Chicanos and Chicanas heightened their opposition to various forms of oppression and inequalities. The movement was energetic. According to Gomez-Quinones & Vasquez (2014), it invited multifaceted range voices, agendas, strategies, and ideologies to join in the pursuit of dignity for their communities, civil rights, and social justice. These authors suggest that Chicanismo was a political identity, representative of ethnic pride and civil rights. They mention that “during the Chicana and Chicano movement, individuals and groups worked to mobilize meanings and ideas about oppression and liberation that resonated with Mexican communities (p.14).

One of the most recounted events of the Chicano Movement was The United Farm Workers' (UFW) march to Sacramento, California in 1966. It represented the brotherhood in a struggle of Filipino and Mexican American farm workers. This event gained national attention and energized individuals who identified with “La Causa” of César Chávez for farmworkers' rights and better work conditions.

According to Gomez-Quinones (2014) alongside the community efforts towards justice, the cultural expression of the movement highlighted the realities people faced. The culture was central to the movement. It served as a platform to share the struggle of the people and the ideology of the movement. It represented the interconnections between politics and culture. The Chicano, Chicana movement “drew from the cultural memory of earlier generations, the political

heritage of Mexican Americans, and the heritage from across the border from Mexico and Latin America. Activists also explored and deployed Native American heritage” (p. 69). This gave the movement a strong sense of identity and empowerment.

In 1968, Chicano youth demanded better education. They joined in walkouts led by Sal Castro, a social studies teacher in East Los Angeles. More high school students joined in the walkouts. Police arrested 13 Chicano leaders, as a result, students continued organizing. The youth took on the District headquarters and held a sit-in for seven days until the board reinstated Sal Castro to his teaching position at the high school. The efforts and organizing of young students resulted in an increase in the number of college-prep academic courses available to Mexican American and Black students (NEA, 2010).

Chicano, Chicana Movement continued mobilizing against immigration injustice. During the Carter presidency, the Alien Adjustment and Employment Act of 1977 were introduced. It proposed actions to regulate and reduce the presence of undocumented people in the country. It enforced the sanctions to employers and encouraged stricter law enforcement on the border between Mexico and the United States. The suggested immigration reform immediately sparked the opposition of Chicanos as it was exploitative and disrespectful of the Mexican-origin community. Joined efforts to stand against the “Carter Plan” among the Chicano community swiftly emerged. The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and the United Farm Workers (UFW) heavily criticized Carter’s immigration plan as they advocated for higher immigrant quotas and amnesty for all undocumented people (Montejano, 1999). This piece of history is still relevant today. It comes back in the form of hate rhetoric and in the creation of harmful policies that separate families, forbidding a path to citizenship to undocumented young college students, and their parents.

The Chicano, Chicana Movement (CCM) is relevant to the retelling of the Latinx history and Latinx stories in the United States. The movement inspired unity among different communities that searched for equity, dignity, and social justice. I believe that the current reality of the Latinx community should look back into these stories as they are a source of empowerment. Latinx history can serve as a foundation to continue telling the stories of coalition among Communities of Color.

### ***Racialization in the Trump Era***

As an extension of the history of oppression toward the Latino community, it is important for me to include the instances of racism and fear perpetrated in the Trumpism era. There is an intense sentiment of hatred and demonization of People of Color and people from minoritized backgrounds on the sole base of their race, ethnicity, color of skin, language, religion, or gender.

Since the beginning of Trump's presidential campaign, he has given the nation open and blatant permission to all sorts of violence. His message of superiority "Make America Great Again" sewn to the infamous red baseball cap he wears to every political rally and every space he steps into.

A new report *Race in America* released by the Pew Research Center shows that about 58 percent or six-in-ten Americans say race relations in the United States are bad. The survey also indicates that 56 percent of Americans think Trump has made race relations worse. I think that Donald Trump has revitalized white supremacy in the mainstream. His supporters identify with his message of "greatness" and hegemony. These individuals incessantly target minoritized communities on the streets, in peaceful protests, and in legislative spaces with policy conversations that support Trump's ideas on the construction of a border wall along the southern

border and actions on massive deportations, taking children away from their asylum-seeking mothers and fathers placing them in cages, targeting vulnerable immigrant populations with travel bans, refugee resettlement cuts, and anti-abortion laws. The list of horrific actions against People of Color and vulnerable populations during this administration goes on and on.

For instance, on the evening of August 03, 2019, the city of El Paso, Texas cried incessantly. A news article from Vanessa Romo from NPR reported that a 21-year old white gunman drove more than 11 hours from his home in Allen, Texas to kill Mexicans. He entered a Walmart near the border and opened fire killing 22 people and injuring 26. The news article mentions that 20 minutes before stepping into the Walmart the shooter posted “a racist, anti-immigrant screed to a website popular within white supremacy circles. In it, the author ranted against interracial mixing and the "Hispanic invasion of Texas.” This act of hatred left the Latinx community trembling. Personally, it affected me deeply, and to this day my heartaches.

If that was not enough, four days later, there was another major strike against Latinx families. On August 07, 2019, The New York Times reported that federal agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raided several companies in Mississippi and detaining about 680 workers who were believed to be undocumented immigrants. The article by Miriam Jordan states that “the raids were by far the largest to occur since Mr. Trump took office, and the biggest since December 2006, when more than 1,200 people were swept up in a raid at several units of a meat processing company”. The reality is that these 680 workers were fathers, mothers, sons, and daughters of someone. This means that about 680 families are now part of the numbers that represent the increasing family separation concern in the United States due to deportation. These tragic events affected children. They were taken away from their parents in a matter of minutes.

Another New York Times article by Richard Fausset and Adeel Hassan pictures the confusion of children after the massive raids. They mention that “dozens of children, some as young as toddlers, were bewildered when they were picked up from school and taken to makeshift shelters, including the gym in Forest, where the owner fed them dinner with food donated by residents”. These incidents will continue to have devastating consequences for these children. The raids affected entire communities and left another open wound in the heart of the entire Latinx community.

Every single day, I read news reports, social media posts, and recall my conversations with people who have been affected by microaggressions in public spaces, their places of work, or in their classrooms. All of these stories are shocking but not surprising. Acts of violence are not new to People of Color; history can attest to that. In my opinion, what is even more troubling is the fact that despite the efforts of international institutions such as the United Nations on the education of global citizenship in which human dignity and social accountability are at the center, hate crimes in the world seem to occur more often. It seems to me that humanity has forgotten the meaning of human dignity; therefore, global citizenship appears to be discontinued and a mere word in important documents. Global citizens are not those who victimize others and who knowingly spread hate wherever they go, as Donald Trump does.

The rise of hate is not exclusive to the United States, but it is spreading across the world. Another tragic example of this hatred toward minoritized communities was the massive shooting of Muslims in a place of worship in New Zealand on March 15, 2019. There, dozens of families lost their loved ones during the attack that appeared to be motivated by white supremacy and an anti-immigrant ideology (Frazee, 2019).

In the United States, hate crimes rose 17% in a single year. In 2018 an FBI press release on the report *Hate Crime Statistics, 2017* informed that 8,437 related offenses in that year were motivated by bias toward race, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender, and gender identity. Of those 59.6 percent of the victims were targeted because of race, ethnicity, or ancestry bias. The report showed that 50.7 percent of the known perpetrators of those crimes were white. In general, the data shows the urgency to create policies that protect vulnerable communities from any sort of violence or hate.

In the current presidency, Latinx, and other minoritized communities, have been minimized and demonized. I choose to center the narratives of Latinx families on juxtaposing statements such as this “when Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending their best. They’re not sending you. They’re not sending you. They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bringing those problems with us” (Trump, at Presidential campaign kick-off, June 16, 2015). Amid the turmoil the Trump-era is causing, I feel even more responsible to engage in scholarly work that fosters counter-narratives about Latinx. Now more than ever, educators and community organizers must come together to advocate for programs that empower families. The Latino immigrant community comes along with wealth in the form of values, work ethic, and culture. Intergenerational family programs can encourage not only learning but solidarity among families of Color and at the same time be spaces for resilience and healing.

The existing reality of Latinx in the United States is disturbing. Constant stress, fear, and uncertainty follow the steps of entire families every day. A reality like this is not acceptable and should not be normalized.

## Yosso's Familial Capital Concept

The *familial capital concept* derives from Yosso's (2006) *cultural wealth model*. The author denotes six forms of capital that Communities of Color possess. These are aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital. She states that these forms of capital are not mutually exclusive; they are dynamic and interact with each other as part of community cultural wealth. For the purposes of this research, I will center my understanding from the familial capital lens. For Yosso the conceptualization of this form of capital is presented in the following quote:

Familial capital refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition...Our kin also model lessons of caring, coping and providing (*educación*), which inform our emotional, moral, educational and occupational consciousness (p. 79)

As stated in Yosso's model, familial capital is a wide-ranging form of capital that includes the members of the immediate family and extends to individuals that are not necessarily related by blood, individuals that are considered part of the kin. Latinos include other people as part of their family by close friendships or *compadrazgo* (godparenthood). This extension of the *familia* and familial capital is "nurtured by our 'extended family'" (p. 79).

This form of capital includes the story of the Latino immigrant families that emerge as forms of funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992). Additional research on biliteracy and family stories by Dworing (2006) supports that children who participated in an English and Spanish writing program "used their funds of knowledge as a key resource to accomplish this work, gathering stories from their mothers and fathers, aunts, uncles, and

grandparents” (p. 518). The interaction between both languages and the familial capital connected the family stories to the writing skills of the children. These researchers provide us with the significance of including the family stories in the education pathway to prepare Latinx first-generation students for college success and graduation.

Furthermore, the kinship among Latino families offers the opportunity to develop a network of support outside of their homes, extending to their communities, schools and other spaces with resources and extra supports for students in those families to pursue college (Carey, 2016). The connections between knowledge, cultural institutions, and family wisdom present greater chances for students to “harness college going familial capital and employ it in gaining access to upward social and economic mobility through postsecondary and higher education” (Yosso 2005, as cited in Carey, 2016 p. 725).

### **The Latino Family and Community in the United States**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2017), the number of Latino households in the United States in 2016 comprised 16.7 million. Counting a total of 57.5 million Latinos as of July 1, 2016, they are considered the largest ethnic or racial minority. Latinos represented 17.8 percent of the nation’s total population. In my opinion, these statistics present an opportunity for educational policies and call for the inclusion of the Latino family voice in education spaces. These actions can benefit the advancement of the Latino community and contribute to the progress of the nation at the economic, social, and international levels. With that in mind, these numbers show the urgency of providing Latino families with opportunities to engage in the educational development of their children and themselves.

Notably, these numbers have been increasing throughout the years and will continue to be significant. Personally, these demographics present the occasion to reflect on the struggle for education equality that Latino immigrants have been striving for since the last century. In my opinion, Latino immigrant families must be included in the conversations about ways to enhance the higher education attainment of their families from early childhood to college. It is time for education reform to include the stories of Latino families in the process of liberation and advancement of the Latino community in the United States. Including the immigrant Latino family story in the education context with an emphasis on the provision of intergenerational, culturally relevant programs that support the academic success of the first-generation college students in the education pathway is worth considering; however, it is important to recognize and name the prejudice that surrounds the Latino story and history in the United States.

In other words, it is time to move beyond the emphasis to mend or blame parents, and explore culturally relevant ways that support engagement, guidance and enrichment of the whole family experience in the education system (Strom and Strom, in London, 2011; Moreno & Valencia, 2002; and Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). It is worth noting that “a majoritarian story distorts and silences the experiences of people of color” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 29).

Historically, the Latino family story has been vandalized with stereotypes and its history has been obviously absent from the school textbooks. A content analysis study conducted by Cruz (2002) discovered that the histories of Latinos were reduced in school history textbooks by these conceptualizations “Mexican Americans ‘came from Mexico to work as migrant farm laborers’, Puerto Ricans ‘make up the second-largest group of Hispanics . . . and live mostly in the Northeast’, and Cuban Americans ‘fled to America after 1959 to escape Communist rule in their homeland’” (p. 330). She also found that these school textbooks “tend to portray Latin

Americans as alternately violent, passive, lazy and unwilling to assimilate into mainstream U.S. society” (p. 323). This example provides a hint on what has been prevalent not only in school textbooks and schools but scholarship, media outlets, education practice, and policies.

In addition, the mystification of the Latino family story forms a negative connotation. This antagonistic narrative has been perpetrated by deficit attitudes or negative stereotypes from which the Latino family story and history have been approached. The deficit approach surges from the majoritarian story. The majoritarian story implies neutrality, but subtly makes assumptions and incites negative stereotypes about People of Color (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

For instance, “the majoritarian story tells us that limited or Spanish-accented English and Spanish surnames equal bad schools and poor academic performance” (p. 29). This majoritarian story has been oversimplified or assumed as a general fact enclosing the message that family background and socioeconomics determine the success of students in school. It continues to perpetuate a deficit approach as “majoritarian stories are not often questioned because people do not see them as stories but as “natural” parts of everyday life” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 28).

Similarly, Garcia and Guerra (2004) refer to the limited framework from which the family story is understood. They point out that “views about educational success are shaped by personal ‘sociocultural and linguistic experiences and assumptions about appropriate cultural outcomes’” (as cited in Yosso, 2005 p. 75). To provide more context in this instance Yosso (2005) states that “educators assume that students, parents, and community need to change to conform to this already effective and equitable system” (p. 75). This perpetuation of the deficit mindset is disguised as effectiveness that only serves the views of those who claim to know what is best for Communities of Color and fail to consider their stories. Preconceptions like these

exemplify the misrepresentation and misperception of the assumed disengagement of Latino parents as a consequence of a deficit thinking attitude.

According to Arzubiaga (2007) “deficit thinking about Latino/a parent includes perspectives that attribute academic underachievement to cultural deficit theories, to a culture of poverty, and to social capital ideas” (n.p.). Moreno and Valencia (2002) argue that the basis of the mythification of Latino parents is based on the negative preconception of a deficit thinking. They state that this myth “refers to the idea that students, particularly of low-SES background and of color, fail in school because they and their families gave internal defects, or deficits that thwart the learning process” (p. 228). These assertions are based on a pseudoscientific notion (Valencia, 1997). Therefore, it is imperative to demystify the assertions that are based on deficit thinking.

These negative views on what parent engagement means in the mainstream can be further challenged by including the participation, voices, experiences, and opinions of the Latino immigrant families in the education system through intergenerational, culturally relevant family programs. LaCrit provides opportunities to challenge opinions on the lack of parent engagement. I believe that an asset thinking approach with a familial capital perspective encompasses a more comprehensive analysis of the stories of Latino families, as it incorporates culture and funds of knowledge.

### **Culture and Funds of Knowledge**

Culture is a versatile term, therefore, used in a variety of ways. According to the definition of UNESCO:

[Culture] is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society.

Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti (2005) state that “the term culture is loaded with expectations of group norms and often-static ideas of how people view the world and behave in it” (p. 10). They consider that the complexity of the term limits what groups and practices among them can be. They rather examine culture based on the practices that exist in households ushering in an outlook of interculturality, as “households draw from multiple cultural systems and use these systems as strategic resources” (p. 10).

As stated in the UNESCO’s definition above, culture is a vivacious term, therefore difficult to define. Personally, as for Gonzalez et al. (2005), I consider that culture entails the ways of doing and knowing that is intimate to a family, but also shared in a community. In addition to that, I consider the importance of borderland experience (Anzaldúa, 2012). I support the inclusion of ways of knowing that connect the Latino community in many ways. As pointed out in Geneva Gay’s research:

the sociocultural system of the child’s home and community is influential in producing culturally unique preferred modes of relating to others... as well as preferred mode of thinking, perceiving, remembering, and problem solving (Ramirez & Castañeda, 1974, p.32 as cited in Gay, 2018 p. 202).

The inclusion of these experiences in the teaching and learning process facilitates a culturally responsive approach that enriches the learning of intergenerational groups of families so that further education on both sides is considered and pursued. For instance, the borderland

experience not only entails the physical aspect of crossing territories. Delgado (2006) states that borderlands entail more than crossing borders. They also encompass “the borderland between cultural sensibilities and ethnicities, between citizens and “alien”, between generations, between diverse mothering practices, and between meanings of “womanhood” (p. 147). They include the practices of teaching and learning among different generations as pedagogical spaces between the participants and the elements used in those practices. For instance, Latina mothers' and daughters' process of teaching and learning through body and words and the creation of a “third space” where dilemmas and possibilities are negotiated between them (Villenas, as cited in Delgado, 2006). These are examples of the relevance of intergenerational learning in Latino culture and traditions.

In this process, the facilitators of the programs need to be conscious of the importance of culturally relevant practices and teaching. Based on my experiences as a Latina, immigrant, woman, mother, daughter, and educator, culture has always been present in my learning experiences and teaching practice. As a result, I advocate for a culturally responsive teaching and learning approach to intergenerational family programs. In particular, among the immigrant Latino community as we share practices, wisdom, knowledge, and in some cases language. Unfortunately, for Latinos, the approach to cultural and familial capital has been misunderstood by policies and educational reforms. These forms of capital have been enacted as a deficit. Ginsberg (1972) states that “according to deficit thinkers, low-achieving minority youths have parents who do not teach them to be assertive problem solvers and knowledge seekers” (as cited in Valencia, 2002, p. 197).

In contrast, Delgado (2006) takes on a strength perspective opposing the cultural deficit thinking approach that haunts Latinos. She states that Chicana college students draw from

“pedagogies of the home to enhance their academic success” (p. 114). These pedagogies of the home, she claims, share an intimate link with the conceptualization of “funds of knowledge” vital to *Mexicano*/Latino family survival and are passed on from one generation to the next.

Similarly, Villenas and Foley (as cited in Valencia, 2002) indicate that Latino/a ethnographers show in their studies that the uses of cultural and linguistic competencies students use in school build strong foundations for their academic success. Moreover, Delgado (2006) explains that “community and family knowledge is taught to youth through such ways as legends, *corridos*, storytelling, and behavior” (p. 114). In addition, Browning-Aiken considers household funds of knowledge as a different approach to the deficit model of instruction based on her idea of the underutilization of cultural resources and experiences of minority, working-class students (as cited in Gonzalez et al., 2005).

Overall, these understandings lead me to presume that intergenerational programs that consider households’ funds of knowledge and regard the borderland experiences, cultures, and familial capital of the families involved might offer a valuable option to confront the rhetoric surrounding the Latino education achievement gap. What is more, I am confident that intergenerational learning can make a difference in the attainment of further education among Latinx students. However, the inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogy in the process is essential.

### **Cultural Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)**

Before making strong headway in the vocabulary of educators, professors, and administrators, the term Cultural Relevant Pedagogy was first used by Gloria Ladson- Billings (1995) as a result of observations of the particular strategies and reflections of African American

teachers used in their classrooms. She saw the need of understanding the intersections of pedagogy and culture as a way to advance social justice and equity. She defined this pedagogy as one of opposition, collective learning, and empowerment.

Ladson-Billing's approach to teaching and learning from the standpoint of CRP was that of opposition, of the re-imagination of the student learning experience, and the one that invited the cultural identity of the student into the classroom. She believed that “culturally relevant pedagogy must provide a way for students to maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically” (1995, p. 476). As stated before, Ladson-Billings proposed three criteria that epitomize culturally relevant pedagogy; (a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop or maintain cultural competence; (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order (p. 160).

These three pillars are intertwined and seek collective learning and empowerment of students of minoritized backgrounds. Teachers and curriculum integrate culture, heritage, history, funds of knowledge, community knowledge, stories, and wisdom. These elements support the educational success of students of minoritized backgrounds, encouraging them to honor their cultures, languages, identities; and challenges them to think critically and engage in collective learning. All-encompassing, CRP provides opportunities to students to learn from each other's experiences, honoring their whole selves. The words of Nieto (2010) echo what I have witnessed in my work with families, students, and the coaching of future teachers. She states that “education cannot be separated from the social, cultural, economic, and political context in which it happens” (p. 221).

Moreover, Souto-Manning (2018) reminds us that the inclusion or exclusion of communities, histories, stories, languages and voices in the curriculum depend on the decisions of those who are in power and that “it is important to understand that the knowledge students and their families have is *culturally situated*—not wrong” (p.17). Her assertions highlight the absence of cultural understanding and cultural relevance in the teaching and learning experiences of minoritized students. In other words, students and families who do not fit in the majoritarian story are faced with the cultural deficit perspective and the achievement gap story (Au, Brown & Calderón, 2016; Delpit, 2006, Yosso, 2005).

Souto-Manning (2018) points out that overlooking the importance of the role that diverse cultures play in teaching and curriculum gives an advantage to the privileged culture and power, restricting the learning of students from minoritized backgrounds. This allows for the perpetuation of oppressive practices that restrain cultural identities creating more marginalization of culturally diverse students as they are socialized outside their communities (Valenzuela, 1999). Consequently, to confront the practice of schooling as a “subtractive process”, culturally responsive pedagogy surges as a revolutionary pedagogy, opposing transactional education, and resisting institutional racism. I consider it to be a pedagogy against oppression.

Additionally, according to Pirbhai-Illich, Pete, and Martin (2017), “[CRP] grew out of the need to address the ways in which education in multicultural societies systematically disadvantage students whose cultures are not reflected in the mainstream pedagogies, curricula and organizational structures” (p.13). From a CRP standpoint, effective teaching supports and honors the strengths of the student applying culturally relevant centered practices. The idea of culture is a central element of the student identity and “funds of knowledge” (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

In like manner, Gay (2018) supports that culturally relevant teaching acknowledges the cultural diversity of minoritized students. Furthermore, Gay's research offers highlights on the nature of culturally relevant pedagogy. For her, CRP represents qualitative attributes that comprise the profile of culturally responsive teaching. These characteristics of culturally responsive teaching are a) validating and affirming; b) comprehensive and inclusive; c) multidimensional; d) empowering; e) transformative; f) emancipatory; g) humanistic; and, h) normative and ethical. Therefore, "culturally responsive teaching is the behavioral expressions of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning" (p.37) challenging various forms of intolerance, stereotypes, racism, and oppression. She points out that culturally relevant teaching uses the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students as strong ways to make learning relevant.

### **The Importance of a CRP Curriculum in Latino-based Intergenerational Family Programs**

The consideration of culture in the curriculum sparked conversations among scholars, researchers and teachers (Au, 2014, Delpit, 1995, Gay, 2018, Ladson-Billings, 1995). As an educator of color, I support the premise of including, not only culture, but language, and family knowledge into the education curriculum.

The following quote by Saifer, Edwards, Ellis, Ko & Stuczynski (2011) expresses my sentiment about the inclusion of culture in the learning process; "learning is the act of making meaning out of experience. [Therefore] it is reasonable to say that no learning situation is culturally neutral" (p. 211). These words illustrate the essence of the connection between learning and culture. Hence, a culturally relevant pedagogy approach to the curriculum of

intergenerational Latino family programs seems fit. As Gay (2018) mentions “the fundamental aim for culturally responsive pedagogy is to *empower* ethnically diverse students through academic success, cultural affiliation, and personal efficacy” (p. 142).

The empowerment of Latino parents through intergenerational learning programs is necessary. Family programs that offer opportunities for them and their children to continue their learning and that draw from their familial knowledge, culture and languages might present an important opportunity for college completion of first-generation college students in those families. The culturally relevant curriculum approach, as a continued explanation by Geneva Gay, should be used to help students [and families] to emphasize their attitudes, abilities, powers, and experiences. To this end, the inclusion of families in the curriculum creation, and decision making is important due to the “dialectic relationship between knowledge and the knower, interest and motivation, relevance and mastery” (p. 142).

In short, intergenerational family programs centered in a culturally relevant pedagogy and curriculum are needed in Latinx communities. To illustrate, Saifer et al., 2011, support the significance of incorporating the experiences of families, students and communities in curriculum and every aspect of the educational process. These researchers state that a culturally relevant curriculum is in itself a “very deep and effective form of family involvement” (p. 213).

In that regard, it is important to note that Latino parent engagement in schools is not homogeneous. Schools have not been able to embrace the uniqueness of Latino parent support due to the antagonistic interpretation that Latino parents do not care about their children's education (Delpit, 2006, and Yosso, 2006). Consequently, the inclusion of culturally relevant pedagogy and curriculum in schools is necessary to engage families in a way they are honored

and included. Delpit (2006) advocates for the involvement of adults who share the same culture of the children of color in the discussion about their instruction. This idea is supported by the work of Tutwiler (2005) as well. Tutwiler suggests that parent involvement should not be based primarily on the expectations of the school. She mentions that the way schools measure parent participation counts as the direct interaction between the school and the family, for example, parent participation in school government and consistent attendance to school events. She observes that these limitations narrow the notion of appropriate parent responses to education and are misunderstood by school personnel, that ultimately do not recognize the various ways families chose to be involved in the education of the children. Additionally, Hong (2011) research on parent engagement, based on a community organization initiative in a predominantly Latino community in the northwest side of Chicago, provides evidence on the intersections between school and community.

Furthermore, testimonials from community organizers and participants of the Parent Mentor Program in Hong's (2011) research illustrate how parents develop a transformed relationship with the school as a result of their engagement. As parents establish a closer relationship with the schools, they become more familiar with their operations, personnel, teachers, and other parents.

This "result is a sense of community that forms around relationships points of connections, and an ethos of trust familiarity and respect" (p. 81). Community is a fundamental element to be considered in the culturally relevant approach to curriculum and pedagogy, as "knowledge must be accessible to students [and parents] and connected to their lives and experiences outside school" (Gay, 2018, p. 142) and that is the community in which they live.

Notably, with this assertion about the inclusion of the community in the curriculum, I intend to point out that the culturally responsive approach in the curriculum is not exclusive to the K-12 classroom. Therefore, CRP curriculum is important in the work with families and communities. The integration of a CRP approach in community education programs is also fitting. Parent engagement goes beyond “simply ensuring that parents physically get into the classrooms, the idea behind fundamental change in schools lies in building a community of families and schools” (Hong, 2011, p. 61).

Based on my experiences working with parents of students of color, particularly Latino families, I acknowledge the significance of CRP as the basis of a curriculum for community-based intergenerational learning programs. Certainly, community education work should center its practices in culturally relevant pedagogy. It also must bring in the voices of the members of that community. At the same time, families and schools must work together on determining pedagogical practices, including community needs and assets. More importantly, two-way conversations are essential to the foundations of the meaningful curriculum in intergenerational family programs. As Hong (2011) remarks “authentic dialogue is critical because when schools and families remain distant, estranged, or antagonistic, such attitudes can pose added tensions on children, who must navigate the dissonant worlds of home and school” (p. 15).

For instance, families’ participants of the Parent Mentor program that Soo Hong researched share their insights on the program and the ways they contributed to not only their children's education but the children in their schools. Here, I emphasize Gipsie’s testimonial, she is a mother participant in the Parent Mentor program. Her words illustrate the relationship parents build in the school’s spaces and the classrooms. I think it encompasses the essence of a

culturally relevant curricular approach that allows for another important factor in this equation, which is the sense of community.

Just as schools become more familiar places for parents as they work inside classrooms and build relationships with teachers, Gipsie's sentiments reveal the possibility that as parents become active participants and leaders, the school becomes a more familiar and comfortable place for students, What results is a sense of community that forms around relationships points of connections, and an ethos of trust familiarity and respect (Hong, 2011, p. 81).

The families enriched the curriculum. Families provided topics they are interested in exploring and learning. Similarly, families contributed with their wisdom and invited others to learn more about their cultures and ways of doing. For instance, Amanti (2005) shows the importance of validating the experiences of culturally diverse families in the curriculum. She notes that for a long time these families and their knowledge have been minimized because they are depicted as “deficient and lacking insufficient stimulation for academic success” (p. 138). Encouraging families to share their knowledge and validating it through the curriculum resists the majoritarian story. It encourages each community to create its unique approach to teaching and learning, supporting their children's holistic success in their K-16 education journey.

### **Connecting the Dots: Intergenerational and Lifelong Learning, Latino Family Engagement, and First-generation Latinx College Attainment**

#### **Intergenerational and Lifelong Learning in Latino Families**

A UNESCO (2000) international comparative study on intergenerational learning in ten countries concluded that “intergenerational programmes are vehicles for the purposeful and

ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and younger generations for individual and social benefits” (p. 10) the researchers in this collaborative international study agreed that this definition is broad and takes into consideration the cultural contexts and development of the countries referred in the study. Furthermore, the report shows that the concept of intergenerational learning is historically rooted in family relationships in the different cultures.

However, this conclusion might be different for families of Latino descent in the United States. The history of Latinos in the United States has been of struggle, resistance, and oppression. That oppression has taken away some of the cultural connections, languages, and traditions as a result of acculturation and assimilation. For families of Latino descent, in some cases, intergenerational learning has served as a tool for resistance. It has been a conduit to the preservation of values, languages, and traditions in immigrant families. In this case, intergenerational learning from the standpoint of Latin-Americans means the passing on of family knowledge through the use of stories, and ways of doing not only as resistance but as resilience (Delgado, 2006; Villenas, 2006; Moraga, 2018).

Considering this, I present my understandings of the intersections between culture, lifelong learning, intergenerational learning, and education. From the very minute we are born and until the last minute of our existence, we learn. Learning is ever-present in our lives, sometimes is loud and vibrant, other times it seems to be muted and deep in slumber. At least, that is how I have experienced it. Undeniably, learning is lifelong and it is present across our lifetime. At the same time, the culture in which we are born into shapes us. I positioned culture in the center of the diagram because I believe it is crucial to intergenerational learning. Intergenerational learning is informed by culture and carries the essence of familial capital (Yosso, 2005) and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 2005). It embraces the rest of the elements in

these interactions. There are interconnections, at different degrees, between formal and non-formal education throughout our lives as well. Yasunaga (2014) provides clear definitions of these types of education. For instance, informal education is not institutionalized and includes activities that occur in the family, in the workplace or in the community. As opposed to formal education which is institutionalized, planned through public and private organizations, and recognized by the education authorities of a country.

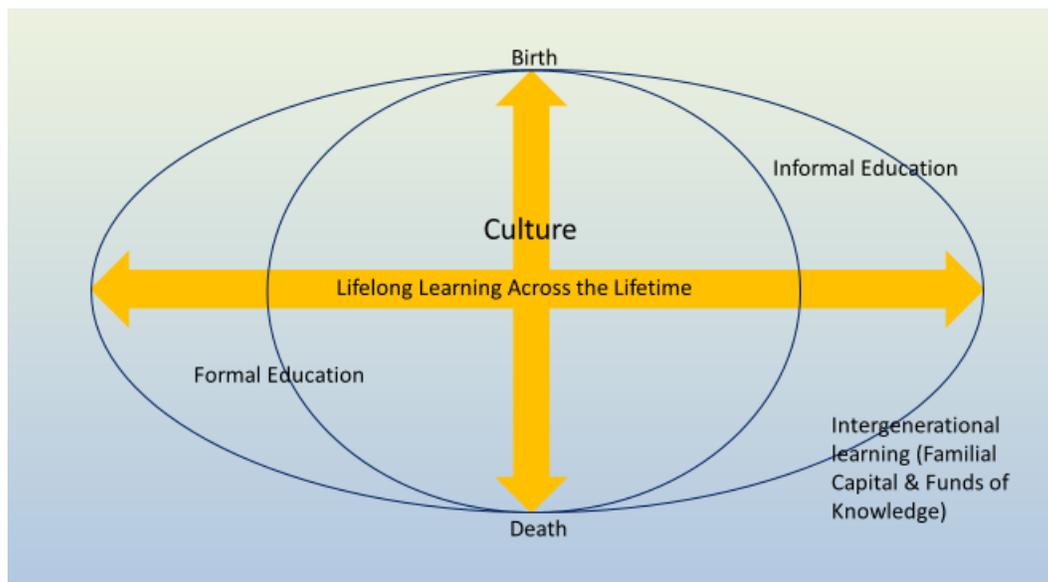


Figure 2.1. My understandings of the intersections of culture, lifelong learning, intergenerational learning, and education. Inspired by Hanemann, U., 2015, Jarvis, P., 2009, Moll, et al., (2005), Unesco Institute for Lifelong Learning, UIL (n.d.), Yeaxlee, B., 1929, and Yosso, T., 2005.

As for lifelong learning, Hanemann (2015) points out that it is becoming increasingly important not only as an organizing principle in education and learning but as an absolute necessity for everyone. She indicates that “promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, as suggested in the SDG education goal, involves meeting the “basic learning needs” of every person” (p. 295). Hanemann views on lifelong learning encompass the importance of providing opportunities for “disadvantaged individuals and groups who have been excluded from or failed to acquire basic competencies through formal schooling” (p. 295). In that regard, the data from

2006 showed that “the highest level for Hispanics born outside of the United States [was] less than ninth grade” (Tinley, 2009, p. 274). Additionally, according to a report produced by the Immigration Policy Institute, 64% of the nation’s immigrant-born adult population without postsecondary education were Hispanic.

The article “Mexican Immigrants in the United States” (2018) provides information about the educational attainment of Mexican immigrants. The authors, Jie Zong and Jeanne Batalova, present data that shows that Mexican immigrants ages 25 and over have much lower educational attainment in comparison to native- and overall foreign-born populations. This fact demonstrates that about 55 percent of Mexican adults in the United States did not have a high school diploma, versus 28 percent of all immigrant adults and 9 percent of the native-born in the year 2017. Regarding higher education among this population, only about 7 percent of Mexican immigrants had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to about 32 percent of the U.S. born and 31 percent of all immigrants.

The data provides a snapshot of the situation of Latino immigrant families and the education they attained in their countries of origin. It also offers an opportunity to flip the narrative and encourage actions against the achievement gap. That achievement gap must be seen as an opportunity gap. This disparity must be addressed. It is important to start paying attention to the data and find ways to offer families opportunities for learning based on a lifelong learning approach. Moreover, intertwining intergenerational learning and situating these in community spaces or in their children's schools so that anticipated barriers for participation are minimized. Correspondingly, the emphasis on additional opportunities to continuous learning and the development of the families’ navigational capital particularly on the education system of the United States, are important ways to support first-generation college students. Considering this,

the formalization and equitable funding for intergenerational family programs may well enhance the academic skills of Latinx children and parents, encourage educational opportunities, and support the families' understanding of the American system of education from kindergarten to college, with the hope that more Latinx youth graduate.

### **Latino Family Engagement**

The representation of Latino families in the education system is rapidly increasing. These families have children throughout the education pipeline, from early childhood education to higher education, stumbling upon the challenges of a complex education system. In this regard, a study done by Tornatzky, Cutler, and Lee (2002) shows that many Latino parents are unprepared to support their children in their journey to higher or continuing education. For instance, Tornatzky, et al., relate that many parents of first-generation Latino students, who are ready to enter college, experience confusion regarding the pathway that needs to be taken to access higher studies. This lack of resources to assist their children is not because Latino parents do not care about their children's education. In fact, two studies, one conducted by Viramontes Anguiano, Salinas and Garcia (2010) and the other, by Viramontes Anguiano and Lopez (2012) demonstrate that Latino parents hold a high respect and care about the education of their children.

To respond to the educational demands of the increasing Latino population, developing lifelong learning families might be the key to the advancement of the Latino community in the United States. Lifelong learning is relevant to the progress of Latino, immigrant families, and their communities. Schools have the responsibility to advance vulnerable communities; therefore, they should support the development of families of lifelong learners adjusting how they reach Latino families. Moreover, schools must understand the communities of color they

serve. Research by Quijano and Daoud (2006) found that many Latino parents felt excluded from the school community. These researchers suggest that their “involvement should be customized to specific families and their community and to the specialized schooling needs of their children” (p. 258).

Parents are usually the first educators in a child’s life. Most Latino families consider their role essential in “ensuring that their children have food, clothing, and shelter and that they are socialized into the norms and expectations of the family” (Chrispeel & Rivero, 2001, p. 122). Most Latino parents want a good education for their children, in the home and in school.

I believe that schools should provide Latino parents with ample opportunities to engage in the school in different ways, going beyond parent conferences and cultural nights. The integration of Latino parents in the school curriculum through parent engagement programs using an intergenerational learning approach might empower parents, provide them with resources and strategies that would add to the support they already give their children at home. As a result of these interactions, parents and children might engage in an interactive circle of teaching and learning, critical thinking, and strengthen family connections.

The integration of intergenerational learning in the school curriculum might be an equalizer for Latino families. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 25% of Latino families were living below the poverty line in 2010. These numbers demonstrate the urgency of creating programs that encourage parents to engage in their schools and community. Family learning programs offering a culturally relevant curriculum might set a premise towards breaking the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage and poverty in the Latino community in the United States, as they guide Latino families in the navigation of the American system of education.

## **First-Generation Latinx in Higher Education**

The pathfinders in higher education are young Latinx who are the first in their family to attend college (Macias, 2013). These college students and graduates are defined as first-generation. I belong to the group of the firsts, but the efforts of this generation must not desist if we want our next generations to follow in our footsteps to higher education. Data from Excelencia in Education reports in 2015-2016 that only 22% Latinx adults ages 25 and older hold an associate degree or higher, in comparison to the 39% to all adults in the United States.

Additional figures show that graduation rates among Latinx in the State of Illinois, in the same year, were 37% compared to 56% graduation among their White counterparts. There is a statement in that fact sheet mentioning that Latinos will need to earn 6.1 million more degrees by 2020 so that the nation can be the top ranking in the world for college degree attainment. By choosing this statement I do not intend to make the matter of college completion a global competition, but for the intention of this research, this point underlines the importance that a higher number of first-generation Latino heritage youth must graduate.

The current data indicate that Latinx are still significantly behind in the attainment of college degrees. According to the Excelencia in Education report *Latinos in Higher Education: Compilation of Fast Facts (2019)* almost half of Latinos (44%) were the first in their family to attend college, compared to African American (34%), all (29%), Asian (29%), and White (22%) students. A noteworthy fact presented in that report shows that over one-third lived at home with their parents. These families are presented with a complex puzzle when it comes to navigating the system of education from beginning to end. A solution to the deciphering of this puzzle could be the early and continuous information on college readiness. This report mentions that

information on awareness of the education system, process for accessing college, how to prepare and pay for college is essential to the increases in preparation, access, and choice in postsecondary education.

The present challenge for first-generation families is the limited access to culturally relevant, bilingual and accessible information on the higher education system. I believe that educators and policymakers should include Latino parents in the process of college attainment. Based on their dedication and the achievement of the *American dream*, we may assume that college attainment may allow these families and communities to live a better quality of life. In this regard, educating families about the importance of continuous learning, and the intersection between this process and college readiness may cause a reduction in the percentage of Latinx students who drop out of high school and those who do not complete university or community college. The Latinx dropout rate in 2016 represented 10% with about 648,000 youth ages 18 to 24 (Gamlich, 2017). This number might not seem shocking, but it is very significant when compared to other dropout rates of 4.6% for Whites and 6.5% for Blacks (National Center of Education Statistics, 2017).

These figures should be paid attention to. The story these numbers tell is one that calls to action now. Latino families should be included in this call as “even in college-oriented learning settings, school counselors, teachers, and administrators may misunderstand, underutilize, or ignore the wealth of familial knowledge and resources youth bring with them to school about the college going process.” (Carey, 2016, p. 720). Decision-makers in the education process should not miss the opportunities for comprehensive collaborations with schools, communities, and families.

## **Suggested National and International Intergenerational Family Education Programs**

The Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030, presents an ambitious milestone. I believe that achieving this goal will be difficult if there are not equitable financial supports and a higher prevalence of intergenerational programs along the PreK-16 education pathway. Governments and education administrations could be paying more attention to the importance of including the families in the support of this goal.

At this point, I encourage education leaders to explore obvious options that might have been overlooked. Henceforth, I present some worldwide efforts that integrate the family in the process of learning. I find it important to put forward three international models that have shown success using intergenerational learning in their school curriculum. Besides that, these programs included other essential components that support the well-being of the families making these models more holistic in nature. For example, these programs added healthcare and community engagement alongside the intergenerational approach to learning. These programs are recognized by the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning and appear in their Effective Literacy and Numeracy Practices Database (UNESCO, 2018).

The programs presented below provide an overview of their process, objectives, and results over the years. Although the foci of the programs are on early childhood and elementary, they provide interesting concepts that could be designed for further grades. During my research, I did not find a program that focused its efforts on including intergenerational learning beyond early childhood. The FLY program is the only one that extended its reach from elementary to

middle school. This is an indication of the potential intergenerational family learning programs particularly in the transition from middle schools to high school, and high school to college.

### **Briya Family Literacy Program, United States of America**

Briya Public Charter Schools serve children from Early Childhood thru Pre-K. There are four campuses, all located in Washington, DC. The signature Two-Generation Program promotes an intergenerational approach to learning in addition to providing continuing education, workforce development, career opportunities for parents, and healthcare for families.

The goals of Briya Public Charter School are to provide high-quality education for adults and children that empowers families through a culturally sensitive family literacy model. In addition to those objectives, they strive to:

- Cultivate the skills and capacity of parents to provide nurturing home environments through positive social interactions, rich language exposure, and early literacy experiences.
- Equip parents with critical literacy and job skills necessary to obtain employment.
- Prepare children to enter school.
- Provide healthcare and social services through its partnership with Mary's Center in order to meet learners' academic and non-academic needs.
- Teach the knowledge and skills that are essential for creating strong communities.
- Combat cycles of under-education and poverty that marginalized groups and migrants often experience.

Briya's Two-Generation Program offers culturally relevant education for parents and their children. This is central to the school's approach. They value multiculturalism and diversity as the families enrolled in Briya schools come from over 50 countries around the world. The languages represented in the school are Bengali, Vietnamese, Amharic, Arabic, Mandarin, French, Russian, Tagalog, Tigrinia, Oromo, Nepali, Burmese, Jola among others, and approximately 80 percent of the Briya families are Spanish speaking.

The Two-Generation Program offers families the option to enroll in English classes and digital literacy. All parents receive parenting classes. The program integrates early childhood and adult education as parents and guardians are offered continuing education opportunities such as high school diploma (GED), and medical assistant or child development associate credentials. The four components of the Briya family literacy program are: 1) English language and computer instruction for adults; 2) early childhood education (ECE); 3) parenting classes; and 4) parent and child together (PACT) time which encourages parents and children engagement. In addition, the program offers healthcare through the Mary's Center and connects families to additional community health providers.

Among their results, Briya participants reached 90% in the number of reading materials in their homes, considered during follow-up visits. As a result, 92% of parents reported reading with their child outside of school. 97% of the preschool children who participated in the program for an academic year met or exceeded growth expectations in math and in social-emotional learning. Regarding career workforce development and employment, 90.5% of child development associates students obtained their (CDA) professional license and 92.3% of the medical assistant students earned their registered medical assistant (RMA) credential.

Employment rates were not an exception of success as 78% of parents found jobs and 96% retained employment, according to follow-up surveys.

Overall, the program highlights Briya's core belief "that two-generation learning secures long-term school success for children and economic stability for the whole family". The Two-Generation enrolls adult students with children ages 0-14. Classes are offered Monday through Friday; morning session 9:00-11:30 a.m.; afternoon session 12:30-3:00 p.m. and parents commit to participating for a full academic year.

### **Family Literacy Program (Aprendizajes en Familia), México**

The program *Aprendizajes En Familia* has been implemented by the Regional Cooperation Center for Adult Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (Centro de Cooperación Regional para la Educación de Adultos en América Latina y el Caribe) (CREFAL) since 2011 as a strategy to combat the lag in the education of elementary school children demonstrated in the national ENLACE test. The test measures the basic skills in language and math and categorizes them as insufficient, elementary, good and excellent. In 2009 the test showed alarming results. These indicated that 67.3% of the students in the third, fourth, fifth and sixth grades and the third year in secondary school scored at an elementary or insufficient understanding of Spanish, and 69% had elementary, insufficient knowledge in Mathematics.

Two years later CREFAL launched this program intending to support basic education in rural and indigenous communities with the integration of the institution (CREFAL), classroom and community. Hanemman (2017) points out that "in these locations, innovative socio-educational activities of an inter-institutional, inter-sectoral and inter-generational nature can encourage learning". The program included the families, the classroom, and the community as

indispensable partners in the learning process and offering the program in the languages of the community. The languages of instruction were Spanish and indigenous languages.

The program promotes intergenerational learning, which is based on connection and interaction between the education of children, youth, and adults. Families participate in tutoring networks, engage in school activities, and share their knowledge and learning with the community. Overall, the program seeks to have an impact on the development and quality of life of families by promoting the interaction of the adults and the children through learning in addition to facilitating social engagement. Additionally, schools in the community participate in the program. These schools are expected to provide meaningful education, establishing tutoring networks and carrying out projects for the benefit of the school and the community. The Family Learning Program strives to achieve the following objectives:

- To ensure that all participants complete their basic education, work together to form literate communities and carry out their own community development projects.
- To promote a substantive education, connecting knowledge gained from school with family and community activities.
- To increase the family involvement in the children's school education and to boost recognition of the family as the first source of education for children.
- To establish schools as institutions that guarantee time and space for the development of basic literacy (reading for understanding, writing and self-correction, and basic mathematical calculations) in the scope of lifelong learning.
- To improve educational achievement by creating tutoring networks and supporting the School Social Participation Councils (CEPS).

- To establish a flexible model of family and community-based learning founded on the specific and complex reality of how three educational areas interplay (the family environment, school education, and community involvement).
- To support the well-balanced development of children and young people and to promote sustainable community development by engaging the skills and knowledge of all families.
- To set up a national Family Literacy Program to support the Program to Improve Educational Achievement (PMLE), which promotes, coordinates and looks for funding for the plans and programs devised by families who wish to improve the quality of life in their communities. Furthermore, to develop a model to be used across Latin America.

Some of the results of the program are the testimonials of participants expressing their interest in furthering their education as well as support their children's educational development. Another important achievement for the community was the securing of additional funding to build a dining room in one of the schools that participated in the program. Trainings were offered to over 100 participants on the tutoring model and a website with additional reading resources was created.

### **Family Literacy Project (FLY), Germany**

Project FLY is implemented by the State Institute for Teacher Training and School Development (Landesinstitut für Lehrerbildung und Schulentwicklung) of the Ministry of Education, in Hamburg, Germany. The program was piloted from 2004 to 2009 in seven

elementary schools and one kindergarten. Since then more schools have implemented the program. In the academic year of 2017-2018, a total of 54 schools started offering the program.

FLY is an intergenerational family literacy program. It serves immigrant families in Hamburg. This city, in particular, has a large concentration of immigrants from Turkey, Poland, and Afghanistan to name a few. These families come into the German education system with various needs, but one of the challenges these families face is low literacy. This might be a factor in the underperformance of children from migrant families, therefore a very important issue to address (Hanemman, 2017).

Hamburg's Family Literacy Project (FLY) endeavors to develop the literacy skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening, and creativity) of parents and their children. FLY serves parents and children from vulnerable communities, particularly immigrants. The children enrolled in the program are at pre-school, kindergarten and early elementary school, as well as children with special learning needs. According to the former Director of the State Institute for Teacher Training and School Development, the program aims to create and foster partnerships with parents, particularly mothers, helping them create a stimulating learning environment at home.

The entire concept of the program is based on three pillars: 1) involving parents in teaching; 2) parent's meetings; 3) joint activities with parents and children. In addition, the objectives of the project are to promote early speech, reading and writing skills, foster closer relationships between schools and parents; and develop innovative ideas for teacher training.

The project aims to:

- improve children's early literacy and language skills development by training and empowering parents to take an active role in their children's psychosocial and learning development
- improve the literacy skills of parents and children from migrant backgrounds
- promote home-based learning through the provision of learning materials and training of parents as educators
- create strong links and cooperation between school or kindergarten and home-based learning
- use literacy training to foster effective and sustainable integration of migrant communities into mainstream German society
- enhance the effectiveness of schools and kindergartens by training teachers and educators.

The implementation of the program is led by kindergarten teachers. Due to its intergenerational approach, the teachers are trained by The State Institute for Teacher Training and School Development in Hamburg. It provides monthly training sessions in family literacy teaching and methodologies. Teachers also learn topics of interest to adults and children. The training is focused on cultural awareness so that teachers are better equipped to serve immigrant families with diverse backgrounds and religions. Also, The State Institute encourages teachers from different schools to share experiences and learn from one another.

The program highlights the participation of parents. FLY believes family constitutes the fundamental springboard for children's sustainable learning and education. Therefore, parents are considered equal partners in the process of learning. The program involves parents at three different levels, 1) the active involvement of the mothers in the class; 2) working with parents

(without children) in parallel sessions, and 3) joint-out-of-school activities. The mothers come to the school one day a week to work and engage with literacy activities, with and without their children, so that they acquaint with how their children learn and to evaluate their learning progress. The outside activities intend to promote social networking among parents and parent-child bonding and action-oriented learning. Overall, these activities also intend to empower parents to exercise their rights as their children's educators.

An article by Rabkin, Geffers, Hanemann, Heckt, and Pietsch (2018) explains that the program reaches about 1000 parents and 1000 children a year. The results of the program include new family literacy rooms in the schools so that parents meet when they visit the schools, interactions with other families from diverse backgrounds and other schools, communications skills, motivation, and an easier understanding of the German society in general.

The authors mention that the program is now extended to serve families of children in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. In Germany, children transition to middle school in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Also, fathers have a designed program within FLY that is delivered by male staff. As a result of the increasing number of refugee families, the program piloted FLY in international refugee student classes in the 2016-2017 school year. And finally, the newest pilot program, the Home Instruction for Parents and Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) focused on children between 4 and 7 years old. This program aims to prepare immigrant parents to help their children develop cognitively, linguistically, and emotionally as a way to better prepare them for school.

I was glad to have the opportunity to observe a session of the FLY program during the time of my participation as a UNESCO CONFINTEA fellow. I visited Georg-Kerschensteiner-Grundschule in Hamburg. There, I witnessed the engagement of parents, children, and teachers

for 90 minutes. The ethnic diversity in the room was admirable, there were families from different continents, including the Caribbean. I met a family from the Dominican Republic. The mother shared that she was very pleased with the program because she learned ways to support her child at home. Besides, she remarked that she did not feel so lonely when she came to the sessions because she was able to relate to other mothers there. Children from immigrant backgrounds, mostly from Turkey (80%), come to Kerschensteiner school. The school is a four-year, half-day, urban elementary school and has 300 students (Rabkin et al., 2018).

## **Summary of Chapter Two**

The literature review directs the reader to research and relevant topics that inform this study. To begin with, the theoretical frameworks touch upon the ideas of John Dewey and Paulo Freire. The work of Dewey reflected on *My Pedagogy Creed* evidences the significance of lifelong learning, and Freire's poignant ideas on liberation from *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* give the theoretical foundation of this work a deeper meaning as the topic I am investigating pertains to social justice and equitable opportunities to education. The theory that informs this work is Critical Race Theory but Latino Critical Theory (LaCrit) drives it.

Following, I present different topics that build the body of the literature review. These themes are to situate the reader in passages of the history of Latinx in the U. S. that have called attention to inequalities suffered by not only Latinx but other minoritized groups. These took place in the midst of the Chicano, Chicana Movement between 1960 and 1980 among those are the farmworkers strike, the East L.A. school walkouts, and the efforts against the Alien Adjustment and Employment Act of 1977 better known as the Carter Plan that targeted the undocumented community. That story provides a transition to the current situation of fear and

hatred experienced by minoritized communities in the Trump administration. These stages in history show the motivation and contributions of the Latino community and deny the false reality that surrounds People of Color, now more than ever.

Defying the status quo with a counter-narrative, I examine the work of Tara Yosso. Her views are relevant as they include the knowledge families have. She presents a cultural wealth model that underscores the importance of familial capital in the learning process. This is in my experience a component that is often disregarded by school curriculum, administration, and teachers. That is the reason I decided to find out more about this and find relevant literature that could inform on the relevance of familial knowledge in academics and in Latinx households.

Subsequently, a section for Culture and Funds of Knowledge offers a glimpse into the importance of these elements and culturally relevant approaches to intergenerational learning programs. In finding the connections between the main elements of this research, intergenerational learning, lifelong learning, and college attainment I referred to national and international models of intergenerational family programs that show promising results. These programs were selected from the UNESCO effective literacy practice database. In addition, I decided to present these programs due to the experiences I was able to exchange with some of the educators involved in those programs. I was fortunate to observe Hamburg's Family Literacy Program (FLY) in November of 2016 during my time as a UNESCO CONFINTEA Research Fellow. I also had the opportunity to discuss the Briya program with Laurie Preheim the Director of Outreach and Adult Education Strategy.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Research Methodology**

The focus of this chapter is to present the methodology and design of this research. The research intends to provide a space to share the experiences of Latino immigrant families of first-generation higher education graduates based on their participation in an intergenerational family program. The program was born amidst confusion and the urgency to answer questions on the 2013 Chicago Public Schools closings. Latinx families gathered in the basement of their community organization in search of those answers. These community meetings led to the creation and implementation of a parent program in partnership with a community-based organization and a local university. The approach of the program later evolved from community meetings into a formal curriculum. The curriculum was built from questions parents needed to answer regarding issues that affected their children's learning and safety. The curriculum consisted of learning modules that included topics such as at-home learning, parent leadership, project management, community engagement, and community organizing.

In this research, I center the stories of three Latino immigrant families that participated in three different cohorts of this intergenerational family program, and I examine their experiences navigating the education system.

The following research question is planned to guide this study:

*What can we learn from Latino families who participated in an intergenerational family program about navigating the American education system for their children's attainment of higher education?*

I employed qualitative research methods for my dissertation research. The methodological approach to the research is narrative inquiry. For Efron and Ravid (2013), “narrative research presents stories of life experiences told by individuals in their own words, accompanied by reflections on the meaning of these stories within a broader educational context” (p. 42). In my opinion, narrative research is genuine and naturally human. It offers me an opportunity to listen to the voices of the Latinx community on a pressing issue that continues to be unresolved, and that is the successful completion of higher education studies. According to Excelencia in Education (2015), Latinos have lower adult degree attainment compared to all adults and lower graduation rates compared to whites.

I delved into this issue, and I considered the methods used by narrative research to investigate how intergenerational family programs might promote Latinx college completion. I focused on the narratives of the members of three families who are former participants of an intergenerational family program in 2013, 2015, and 2016. The stories of the members of three Latinx families seek to enrich the understanding of the topic of interest, which is intergenerational learning in the navigation of the American system of education. I expect to understand whether their participation in the intergenerational programs guided them on the university process and the completion of higher education of the first college graduates in their families.

Moreover, the stories of the families that participated in an intergenerational family program would be keen contributors to the scholarly community. Above all, because their understanding might serve as a tool for advocacy to demonstrate the importance of adequate funding that supports the beginning and continuation of intergenerational programs in

communities of color. Furthermore, the interview questions that guide this study are centered on the stories and experiences of families who participated in an intergenerational family program.

In this section, I provide a brief description of qualitative research and narrative research. I present the research design and detailed information about participants, data collection procedures, data analysis, researcher role, validity and trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

### **Harvesting Stories**

“At the end of the day, we can endure much more than we think we can” –Frida Kahlo

Given that narrative inquiry is at the core of this research, I consider it relevant to mention its relationship with qualitative research. Qualitative research analyzes social phenomena (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This research presents a social problem that concerns the Latinx community and that is the comprehension of the American education system. The study explores the experiences of Latinx parents who participated in intergenerational family programs at some point in the academic journey of their children. Their narratives provide significant information that allows for a broader analysis of the topic at hand.

Primarily, I wanted to harvest stories, listen to them, and nurture them. I believe stories illustrate the intergenerational continuity of knowledge sharing among Latinx families. For example, in my conversations with the parents, they noted the way their children deal with technology. They all shared the comment on technological savviness among the youth, and their feelings about their weak proficiency using technology. Parents shared the memories they had from “technology back then” and youth started teasing their parents in a silly way. They seemed to be enjoying the stories and imagining how their parents dealt with technology in their days.

Without a doubt, narrative inquiry enriches this research as it is collaborative in nature. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define narrative inquiry as “a way to understanding experience” (p. 20). Personally, understanding experience is essential in building bridges that connect parents, schools, culture, and community. The nature of this research intertwines with the essence of these elements and centers that understanding of experience in the immigrant stories of parents and children. It narrates the odyssey they embark on navigating the American system of education that in many ways, resembles a labyrinth. It listens to their experiences, in particular, when making the connection between the different stages in basic education and in a more complex way in the transition to higher education.

### **Qualitative Research**

The methodology of my dissertation is based on one of the qualitative research’s offshoots. According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), “qualitative research methodologies are now well-established important modes of inquiry for the social sciences and applied fields” (p. 1).

To define qualitative inquiry and its process, I referred to the description provided by Creswell and Poth (2018):

Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretative/theoretical frameworks that inform the study or research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written

report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, an elaborate description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change. (p. 8)

This definition clearly describes the process of research I am following. It encompasses three essential elements: the philosophy, the interpretation, and the procedures in the analysis of the social or human problems.

Marshall and Rossman (2016) mention that "qualitative research is pragmatic, interpretative, and grounded in the lived experiences of people" (p. 2). They acknowledge five general hallmarks that distinguish qualitative research. These five signature elements refer to qualitative research, as follows:

- a) takes place in a natural world;
- b) draws on multiple methods that respect the humanity of the participants in the study;
- c) focuses on context;
- d) is emergent and evolving rather than tightly prefigured, and
- e) is fundamentally interpretative.

There are also five common stances that qualitative researchers must maintain:

- a) view social worlds as holistic and complex;
- b) engage in systematic reflection on who they are in the conduct of the research;

- c) remain sensitive to their own biographies/social identities and how these shape their study (i.e., they are reflexive);
- d) rely on complex reasoning that moves dialectically between deduction and inductions,
- e) conduct their inquiries systematically (p. 2).

Furthermore, Marshall and Rossman (2016) make a significant observation on the historical role of qualitative research, for it has been guilty of silencing many marginalized groups. As a result, the “critical perspectives have developed research strategies that are openly ideological and have empowering and democratizing goals” (p. 21). Similarly, Creswell and Poth (2018) note that the research process of today is more attentive to the interpretative nature of inquiry and the positioning of the study within the political, social, and cultural context of the researcher.

For this study, I chose qualitative data collection strategies because “[I] want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between the researcher and the participants in a study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 45). The data collection tools in this study involved semi-structured interviews, a compilation of documents or artifacts, and researcher’ journal reflections. I think that qualitative research provided me with more productive opportunities for data gathering through authentic human connection. What is more, I consider narrative analysis to be the right methodological approach to my dissertation due to its capacity to center the stories of members of historically underrepresented groups as the primary forms of inquiry.

## **Narrative Research**

According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), a narrative study is one of the subtypes of critical genres of qualitative research. They argue that critical genres “could contribute to radical change or emancipation from oppressive social structures” and that springboard through sustained critique or direct advocacy (p. 22). The authors also note that narrative study or storytelling builds counterhegemonic experiences of minoritized groups in the United States. Consequently, the most appropriate methodology of this study is narrative research. I construct the inquiry on narrative analysis with the lens of Latinx Critical Theory (LaCrit).

I consider narrative inquiry to be fit for this study based on the premise that "narrative research is best for capturing the detailed stories or life experiences of a single individual or the lives of a small number of individuals" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 71). The authors continue to state that the narrative allows the researcher to delve deeper into the data collection stage by situating the individuals' stories in their context. As a whole, the narrative provides this research with opportunities to engage in the analysis of stories. For instance, the inclusion of the participants' backgrounds in the analysis and data collection encompasses their personal experiences, their culture, and their historical contexts.

Additionally, narratives and storytelling represent a tradition of my ancestors. Narratives serve as agents of knowledge. For the Latinx community in the United States, the use of stories has been particularly significant. Delgado (1989) draws attention to the vigor of stories among minoritized groups. He points out that “oppressed groups have known instinctively that stories are an essential tool to their own survival and liberation” (p. 2436, as cited in Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). For Marshall and Rossman (2016), a narrative inquiry has the power to

elicit voice. And for narrative researchers, the story is essential as it accounts for the human experience (Clandinin, 2007).

Furthermore, Clandinin (2007) emphasizes that narrative methodology has a particular strength. The narrative's strong point is that of multiple views and how it allows for closer attention to a wider variety of human experience, its diversity, and the in-depth analysis of experiences. Drawing from the narrative methodology's strength on the human individual and collective connections, the weaving of stories presents a chance to understand the experiences of Latinx families whose children are the first ones to attain a higher education degree. And, at the same time, the stories told from the perspective of members of the Latinx community flip the majoritarian story that for many years has surrounded Latino parents along with the false idea that they are careless about their children's education. In the words of former United States Secretary of Education, Lauro Cavazos, "Latino parents deserve much of the blame for the high dropout rate among their children" (Valencia, 1997, p. 190).

Reconceptualizing deficit-thinking with the lived experiences of Latino parents and first-generation college graduates fits the rationale for this research. In particular, these stories of Latino, immigrant parents, and their children resist the "mono vocals, master narratives, standard stories, or majoritarian stories" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 28). The urgency to uplift the voices of Latinx in education is essential to this research.

### **Research Design**

The research design for this study is based on narrative inquiry. According to Josselson (2010), "narrative research begins with a conceptual question derived from existing knowledge and a plan to explore this question through the narratives of people whose experience might

illuminate the question” (p. 872). The overarching question that guided this study invited the participants to describe their experiences in an intergenerational family program. The research design in this study highlighted the voices in each narrative and ensured that “the researcher pays attention to both the content of the narration (“the told”) and the structure of the narration (“the telling”)” (Josselson, 2010, p. 873). Furthermore, I provided detailed information about participants, data collection procedures, data analysis, researcher role, validity and trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

## **Participants**

The following principles guided the selection of three families for this narrative study. The participants of this study were selected after fitting the specific criteria: a) are Latinx, immigrant; b) are parents or guardians who participated in an intergenerational family program anytime between 2013 and 2016; c) youth who completed or will complete undergraduate studies any time after their parent or guardian participated in an intergenerational family program; or d) are youth who attended public schools.

I incorporated the narrative of a family with first-generation college graduates, one family with a college senior, and one family with a teenager considering entrance to a four-year university. The interviewees were from three different households. I include (1) a Latina, immigrant mother and her college senior, (2) the voices of parents whose teenage child is considering enrolling in a four-year university, and their teenage daughter, and (3) the stories of a family whose two children graduated from a university. Altogether, there are eight Latinx participants in the age range of 16 – 50.

I interviewed three Latinx families. The parents are immigrants from Mexico. The youth are American and foreign-born. Families are also of mixed immigrant status, bilingual in Spanish and English, and low-income as noted by the US federal poverty line. The children attend or attended Chicago Public Schools. There are three graduates; two of them graduated in 2014 and 2016, respectively, and the other one is a college senior, who will graduate with the class of 2021. All families participated in an intergenerational family program in different years.

***The Hernandez: (Mother & Daughter is a College Senior)***

Lupe (mother): A 45-year-old mother. She is an immigrant from Guanajuato, Mexico. Her husband is disabled. She has a high-school education. She arrived in the United States in 1995 at the age of 25. She is married and has two daughters, ages 22 and 12. Her family lives in the north-west side of the city in Chicago. They rent a two-bedroom apartment. Their annual income is \$18,000. This family sits at the US Federal poverty guideline as issued by the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Her oldest daughter will graduate in the fall semester from a local four-year university with a degree in Human Resources. Her youngest daughter is 12 years old. She attended elementary public school. She is currently in a private middle school on a full scholarship.

Andrea (daughter): A 22-year-old, young Latinx, born and raised in Chicago. She graduates from a Chicago-based four-year university in the 2020 fall semester. Right after her high-school graduation, she enrolled in this university. She initially pursued a degree in elementary education but decided to change her major to human resources. She is FAFSA eligible and receives a few scholarships that help her to cover some of her tuition, and her part-time job helps her with related college costs, such as books or materials. Now that she is close to

graduation, she plans to enter the workforce, get established, and then continue in her master studies in the next year.

***The Garcia: (Mother, Father, Daughter is a High School Sophomore Considering College)***

Martha (mother): A 47-year-old mother and grandmother of three. She is an immigrant from Mexico with a middle school level of education. She and her husband migrated to the US at the age of 23 and 29. She has three daughters and 10- and 4-year-old grandsons, and another on the way. Her grandsons have special needs. Her oldest daughters were born in Mexico. The oldest is 28 years old; the middle-child is 27 years old and the youngest daughter is 16. Her oldest daughters are both high school graduates. The youngest is a sophomore in high school.

Juan (father): He is a 47-year old father and grandfather of three. He migrated from his native Mexico 24 years ago. His level of education is middle school. He came to the US due to economic hardship and the need to provide for his family. He provides for his youngest daughter, and wife, and supports his oldest daughters and grandsons. He works in a mechanic shop as a body man. Juan brings an income of approximately \$25,000 annually. According to the US Federal poverty guideline, the income of this family sits at the poverty level as issued by the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Nina (daughter): She was born and raised in Chicago. She is a 16-year-old high school sophomore. She is considering enrolling in college. She participated in an early college program this summer. She plans to become a physician.

### *The Martinez: (Mother, Daughter, and Son are College Graduates)*

Rosa (mother): This 48-year-old mother arrived in the United States at the age of 28. She comes from Chiapas, Mexico. She migrated to this country to unite with her husband. Their family was looking for a better quality of life. She crossed the border with her son and daughter. She has two children, ages 27 and 25. Her children still live at home. They rent a three-bedroom apartment in a predominantly Latino neighborhood on the southwest side of the city. The mother and father's annual income is approximately \$20,000. The siblings help the family as they are employed and graduated from college. The parents are on the US Federal poverty guideline as issued by the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

José (son): A 27-year-old young man from Mexico who graduated from a four-year university in Chicago. He received a substantial fellowship that supplied financial assistance for his studies because he was non-FAFSA eligible. He graduated with a degree in business administration in 2015. He is the first in his family to obtain a higher education degree. He currently works as a manager in the restaurant industry. He plans to open his own business in the future.

Laura (daughter): She was born in Mexico and brought to the United States at the age of 5. She is now 25 years old. She completed her degree in business administration from a four-year institution in 2017. She plans to continue her education attaining a master's degree in accounting. She currently works as a financial advisor in a small family-owned accounting firm.

### **Data Collection**

For my research data collection, I gathered the stories of three families. I illustrated the stories of these Latinx families and their experiences participating in an intergenerational family

learning program together with the college completion and considerations of college narratives of their first-generation students. The intimate nature of narratives is the most important reason for the research and analysis of these stories. They provide genuine pieces of information that directly connect with issues that must be informed, resolved, or changed. I consider narrative research a relevant tool for data gathering as it brings in the voices and experiences of individuals that are affected by social and political challenges.

### **Data Collection Strategies**

The strategies for data collection in narrative studies suggest no linear process and can take different shapes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The data gathering was conducted via in-depth interviews. I deemed this approach the best fit for this study. I referred to the views of Seidman (2019), who asserts that the purpose of an in-depth interview is to “understand the experience of those who are interviewed, not to predict or to control that experience” (p. 56). Consequently, the questions proposed in this study aim to gather information and testimonials from the stories of participants. Moreover, in the use of interviews, Seidman (2018) underscores the task of the researcher. The researcher must be skilled, as they capture the experience of the people they interview. The researcher must present these stories in ways that are compelling, detailed, and provide “sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects” (p. 57).

### ***The Interview Process***

I found Seidman’s (2019) explanation of the purpose of interviewing reassuring. He states that the root of interviewing is the interest in the lived experience of someone else and the

understanding of that lived experience. This means that interviewers must allow themselves to be humble, and most importantly, be willing to listen.

For this research, I conducted eight individual interviews with members of three families in addition to three collective interviews with each family. I sent the consent forms to the participants via email to give them the chance to read them and ask for any clarifications before the interview. Also, I asked them to sign them and return them to me electronically. I explained the purpose of the research, the day of the interview, reiterated the volunteer nature of the conversation, and highlighted confidentiality reassuring the interviewee that all information shared would be treated with privacy. I informed the participants that our conversations were going to be recorded for accuracy. I transcribed the interviews conducted in English and transcribed and translated the interviews conducted in Spanish. I recorded the conversations using the Zoom recording tool. I stored the recording directly on my personal computer which uses a protected password. Each recording was assigned with a number to ensure more privacy. Individual interviews lasted around thirty minutes and the family interviews were around sixty minutes.

Initially, these semi-structured interviews were going to happen in the participants' homes. I wanted to immerse myself in their stories experiencing their homes and their neighborhoods with the eyes of a researcher. However, this was not possible due to an unprecedented and unfortunate worldwide health crisis.

On that note, the unparalleled event of the Coronavirus pandemic had to be captured in this research as it became an important part of the narrative not only of the Latinx community but the entire world. This issue did not exist during the proposal but appeared during our

conversations in the interview process. The families shared how they are dealing with the pandemic with comments such as their experience staying indoors or an opinion about the effects of the pandemic in different aspects of life. Currently, the Covid-19 pandemic stares at us and overwhelms us with a mighty blow. The virus has been disproportionately devastating to underrepresented communities. For instance, The Chicago Sun-Times data from the Illinois Department of Public Health reported 11,848 cases among Latinos and 11,353 among African Americans as of April 30, 2020. Unfortunately, these numbers continue rising. Latinos and African Americans are the ones performing essential work in the middle of this pandemic. Many of them have underlying health conditions that make them even more vulnerable to the virus. As of April 25, 2020, the magnitude of this crisis has claimed the lives of 50,439 Americans and 207,446 worldwide according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and John Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center.

Certainly, the conversations on Covid-19 came up from time to time. Right now, Illinoisans are handling a stay at home order that continues until the end of May and that might be extended through the summer. The fact that families shared the ways they were coping with the pandemic offered an opportunity to ease nervousness and another way to relate with each other expressing support and empathy. The interviews continued with a friendly approach.

Every time, I was immersed in their conversations. I listened to the anecdotes, and memories of their homeland. One of the families reminisced their favorite folksongs and the time in their youth when they fell in love. Another family burst out in laughter remembering silly moments together. As I listened to their stories, I realized the happiness these families shared at the moment, despite the odds of yesterday or the upcoming challenges of tomorrow.

**Semi-Structured Interviews.** The use of stories has been an integral part of humanity since time immemorial. Clandinin (2007) points out that stories lived and told help us make meaning and assists us in building lives and communities. To add to this insight, Josselson (2010) states that “narrative is a way of understanding one's own (and others’) action, of organizing personal experience, both internal and external, into a meaningful whole” (p. 871). For Clandinin and Conelly (2000), the narrative is essential to help us understand the experience. They emphasize the fundamental characteristic of narrative inquiry as “a collaboration between the researcher and participants, over time, in a place, or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus” (p. 20). In order to learn from experience and to create a collaborative approach to inquiry, my primary method of data gathering will be interviewing.

I chose to conduct interviews for this study based on the premise presented by Efron and Ravid (2013), that supports that “an interview provides an understanding of the participants’ experiences from their own perspectives as it allows them to voice their ideas, opinions, values, and knowledge on issues related to the investigation” (p. 129) and my personal belief that as an emerging researcher of color I must provide ways for the voices of People of Color to claim their space in the scholarly and research communities.

I find that semi-structured interviews are best suited to highlight the voices of the participants in this study due to their flexibility and their co-construction approach to narrative. Semi-structured interviews are based on open-ended questions prepared before the meeting (Efron & Ravid, 2013). Additionally, the authors mention that in this type of interview, participants are encouraged to “co-construct the narrative and raise and pursue issues that are related to the study but were not included when the interview questions were planned” (p. 99).

Likewise, Saldaña and Omasta (2018) mention that interviews might be the most common method for qualitative inquiry, and one of the most common is the semi-structured interview. In semi-structured interviews, the researcher has the opportunity to ask participants about their experiences, values, attitudes, knowledge, and understanding of various topics related to the study being conducted. Hence, the engagement opportunities that semi-structured interviews provide, and the in-depth understanding of the families' experiences are significant to the narrative that can result from their stories.

The use of open-ended questions gives interviewees the flexibility to express their feelings, experiences, and identify details that will enrich the narrative. The researcher seeks to listen to the participants, refining the questions as the process of research develops, and the understanding of the problem becomes more evident (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Also, Seidman (2019) emphasizes the importance of listening.

Along with following Seidman's rule of "listen[ing] more, talk[ing] less" (p. 91). Seidman and Efron and Ravid recommend including the "grand-tour" question that invites the interviewee to "reconstruct a significant segment of an experience" (Seidman, 2019, p. 91). Besides, Saldaña and Omasta (2018) suggest that the researcher details a list of questions that include the topics wished to be discussed with the participant and that the questions are presented coherently.

For these reasons, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants individually and as a family. The questions invited the participants to tell their stories. I listened to their stories, experiences, and points of view. I pointed out that their opinions, experiences, and stories were valuable contributions to scholarship and resourceful to an issue of relevance for

the Latinx community. From the beginning of my communication with the participants, I anticipated creating a trusted environment. As a result, I established a positive rapport with the families. Marshall and Rossman (2016) point out that the interconnectedness between the researcher and the participant might provide more accurate interpretations of the information. I connected with families through familiar conversations, traditions, and the current worldwide health crisis. I related to the families, and in this way, I created a sense of trust.

I followed the recommendations of Creswell and Poth (2018) regarding the procedures for preparing and conducting interviews which are:

- a) determine the open-ended research questions;
- b) identify interviewees;
- c) distinguish the type of interview;
- d) collect data using adequate recording procedures;
- e) design and use an interview protocol to guide interactions;
- f) refine the interview process through pilot testing;
- g) locate a distraction-free place for interviews;
- h) obtain consent from the interviewee to participate;
- i) as an interviewer, follow good interview procedures;
- j) decide transcription logistics.

The interviews I plan to conduct aim to encourage the participants to tell their stories and share their experiences. This study will be guided by the following grand tour question.

*What can we learn from Latino families who participated in an intergenerational family program about navigating the American education system for their children's attainment of higher education?*

The sub-questions also encourage participants to tell stories not only about their experiences in the program but also about their lives in their countries of origin, their experiences in the United States, their navigation of the education system, their hopes, and their struggles.

1) How can intergenerational learning programs support Latino families in navigating the American education system for their children's attainment of higher education?

2) What is the role of intergenerational learning programs in the attainment of higher education of Latinx, first-generation students?

3) What are the experiences that informed parents' lifelong learning journey and how do these inform their children's own lifelong learning journey?

The following ideas guided the interviews and did not strictly direct the participants:

Tell me about yourself (country of origin, your life in your country of origin, your immigrant story, your experience in the United States in the roles you play, for example, parent, grandparent, employee, community member).

Speak about experiences that might have informed you about college navigation and, eventually, graduation (of your children/ or yourself). Tell me about one or more stories that highlight these experiences.

Tell me about experiences that informed your own continuing education, lifelong learning journey. Please share specific experiences.

Share some ways in which you think your participation in the program assisted in the retention and persistence of the college student

I used a semi-structured format for individual and family interviews. The first group of interviews were virtual and individual. The meetings lasted between 20 and 30 to minutes for each participant. The second group of interviews were group interviews with each of the three participant families. The families determined the time and date of the interview. The interviews were approximately 60 minutes. Due to the current health pandemic, the meetings were conducted via a virtual platform. Currently, all gatherings are prohibited and people are quarantining in their homes.

Riessman (2008) suggests that “researchers can transcribe interviews to develop different types of stories” (as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 71). Therefore, I transcribed all the interviews and translated the Spanish only interviews. The families decided in which language they wanted their interview to be conducted: Spanish, English, or a mixture of both. Also, I examined the transcripts for recurring and I selected testimonials. There were included in the data analysis.

## **Documents and Artifacts**

Documents and artifacts are essential for data collection. Efron and Ravid (2019) consider artifacts physical documents and records that assist in the construction and better contextual understanding of the topics at hand. Artifacts are defined by Saldaña and Omasta (2018) as objects made by humans. These can be handmade, manufactured, or natural, and things that are used in a daily routine or rituals.

During the interviews, I invited families to share artifacts such as family pictures of their student graduates, program participation documents, handouts, or homework assignments. These artifacts represented evidence of the learning experiences they had as participants of the program.

Subsequently, Efron and Ravid (2019) remind us that documents are relevant data sources. I anticipated materials to be present in the interactions with the families. Documents allow the researcher the opportunity to observe a narrative written by others (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018) and provide the possibility to interpret data from existing materials (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a matter of fact, documents reflect the interest and perspectives of their authors or present claims of power and/or legitimacy (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018).

The documents that participants could share as data for this study were handouts parents received during the family program, marketing materials, or certificates of completion. Similarly, artifacts such as photographs of events that took place during the program, social or civic engagement events as a result of the program, children's graduation pictures, parents' graduation pictures, etc. Therefore, documents and artifacts in the collection of data and interactions with the participants were central to the analysis and results.

## **Researcher Journal Reflections**

At my current educational institution, I often hear this quote: “service without reflection is only work.” This is a value the Vincentians, groups of people inspired by the life and work of St. Vincent DePaul, a priest and reformer from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, embrace in their every day. I am committed to service and research, and I believe that this Vincentian insight can also be applied to the fundamentals of research. I also think that research without reflection is only work. It is hollowed work that only presents mere words. It is meaningless.

This important Vincentian principle led me to use a researcher's journal as part of the data for this study. The act of reflection helped me understand the conversations I had with my participants at a deeper level. For Efron and Ravid (2013), keeping a journal helps the researcher to increase insights on the interactions happening in the selected settings, and the behaviors between the participants and the researcher. Also, a journal "may include critical incidents, anecdotes, situations, events, insights, questions, and uncertainties that you consider relevant to your study" (p. 125).

Likewise, Marshall and Rossman (2016) encourage researchers to write; they suggest analytic memos. They argue that writing “is invaluable for generating the unusual insights that move the analysis from the mundane and obvious to the creative” (p. 221). They also stress the importance of writing early and often through the research process. With that intention, I kept a researcher's journal and wrote my reflections and wonderings before and after the interviews.

Keeping a reflective journal encouraged my reflection on the ways I performed as an interviewer. It helped me capture the epiphanies that happened during the interviews and the

conversations with the participants. Most importantly, the journal assisted in my thought process and held me accountable as I captured these families' stories.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis includes the preparation, organization, reduction of the data into themes, coding and condensing, and finally, the representation of the data in figures, tables, or a discussion (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The entire process is complex and laborious. Saldaña and Omasta (2018) recommend the allocation of "slices of time" to the analysis of the data, artifacts, products, and environments (p. 63). I intend to work with a structured timeline that will allow me to use my time between the data collection and analysis strategically; however, I understand the importance of flexibility in the process as well.

In narrative inquiry, Michael Bamberg in Holstein and Gubrium (2012) suggests six premises in the analysis of storytelling. He states that a narrative encompasses abundant interactive activities; captures stories visually and contextually; refers to actors, places and events; can be about the speaker or a third person; are told for a purpose, and reveal aspects of who speakers are. I concur with Bamberg's viewpoints on narrative. They denote interesting points to consider. The author states that narrative practice "does not stop with the analysis of narratives structural designs or content features" (p. 102). On the contrary, it broadens its reach, as it "can highlight and foreground quite different aspects of narrative structure, its content, or performance or it can focus more on the interplay of structure, content, and performance" (p. 102).

I consider the last premise to be of great importance to this research data collection and analysis:

the relational work that is accomplished in storytelling practices is opening up glimpses into how narrators achieve this type of relationship management and at the same time engage in identity practices that result in what we have called a sense of self—probably even a kind of sense that endures across interactive storytelling practices (Bamberg, 2012 as cited in Holstein & Gubrium, 2012, p. 102)

This underscores the relational work as a result of storytelling practices and relevant to the research.

Furthermore, concerning the data analysis for this study, first, I organized the data into text. I transcribed the interviews with the participants in verbatim. Second, I sorted the data of the interviews by individuals and by family. Third, the qualitative analysis was based on predetermined categories drawn from the literature review and the research question. Efron and Ravid (2013) recommend that when using predetermined categories, a list of categories should be created. Once the information was categorized, I revised the original document making sure that none of these pieces of information were taken out of context.

Additionally, I used coding to determine significant themes. Coding the data helped with the identification of emerging and recurring themes from the participants' stories, and the corroboration of the data with the participants. The coding was based on a list of likely themes or theory-generated codes derived from the literature review (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). These in-vivo codes “provide[d] codes that will emerge[d] in real-life data” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 218) The in-vivo codes emerged from the data collected in the participants' interviews.

The research question of this study focuses on families’ stories regarding intergenerational family learning programs and the elements that supported their navigation of the American education system and higher education attainment. The following codes inform the research question. They developed from the literature review and emerged from the families’ stories. Table 3.1. shows the final codes.

Table 3.1. Theory-Generated and In-Vivo Codes.

<b>Theory- Generated Codes</b>	<b>In-Vivo Codes</b>
Intergenerational learning interactions	Potential themes that demonstrate mutual learning activities
Lifelong learning	Potential themes that mention encouragement for engagement in learning at the formal and informal levels
Funds of Knowledge, language, culture	Language, bilingualism, border stories, immigrant stories, prior knowledge, culture
Challenges in higher education	Access, funding, knowledge, belonging
Hopes for the Latinx community	Sentiments, hopes

Source: Based on Marshall and Anderson, 2008, illustrated in Marshall and Rossman, 2016 (p. 219).

### **Validation and Trustworthiness**

Good research practice considers criteria that validate the findings and are trustworthy. For Creswell and Poth (2018), validation is composed of processes that are intended to assess the

accuracy of the findings as best described by the researcher and the participants. The process of validity combines qualitative strategies, for instance, “extensive field time, thick description, and closeness of researcher to participants” (p. 255).

The authors suggest nine validation strategies 1) corroboration evidence through triangulation; 2) discovering a negative case analysis or disconfirming evidence; 3) clarifying researcher bias or engaging in reflexivity; 4) member checking or seeking participant feedback; 5) having a prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field; 6) collaborating with participants; 7) enabling external audits; 8) generating a rich, thick description; 9) having a peer review or debriefing of the data and research process (p. 260). They recommend that qualitative researchers use at least two validation strategies. For this study, I used reflexivity as a way to achieve trustworthiness (Efron and Ravid, 2013), and I corroborated the information with the participants and sought their feedback.

### **Researcher’s Role (Reflexivity)**

The concept of reflexivity, as Efron and Ravid (2013) indicate, “relates to acknowledging how the researchers’ perspectives and positions shape the research” (p. 57). The authors claim that qualitative research underlines the importance of balance in the study, and the acknowledgment of reflexivity from the researcher not only brings that balance, but also provides the researcher with the keenness to understanding her role, and the process of understanding the results of the research.

Additionally, Patty Lather (2015) underlines the need for a reflexivity that “keeps us from becoming impositional and reifies ourselves” (p. 80). However, I recognize reflexivity as an essential element on this journey and a crucial piece in the validation of the data. I am inclined to

the reflexivity Patty Lather (2015) suggests. A reflexivity that allows me, as a researcher, to “reflect on how [my] value commitments insert [myself] in an empirical world” (p. 80). Moreover, laying out the identities that connect me with the people in the study. A reflexivity that allows me to position my understanding of Grandmother’s wisdom and relationship with learning, and my mother’s regards to education.

This research resonates with who I am; therefore, it compels me to reflect on my own story and how it connects me with the study. As part of individual reflection, I begin by acknowledging my multiple identities and how they connect me with the families and the topic of study; for instance, ethnic background, culture, language, immigration story, and perhaps the role of intergenerational learning in our experiences. For the sake of reflexivity, I present the identities I deem relevant. These may connect with some of the study participants, in some instances, with the parents and in some with the youth.

**I come from the Global South.** I was born in what is now referred to as the Global South. In the time of my childhood, Latin-American countries were called Third World countries. So, I was born in one of those, Mexico. My family lived in poverty for most of my childhood and thrived thanks to the hard work of my mother, and the creative mind of my grandmother.

**I am Mexican.** I am from the second-largest city in the Mexican Republic, Guadalajara. The city is cosmopolitan, vibrant, and crowded. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, INEGI), the number of people living in “the City of Roses” accounted for more than 7.5 million in 2015.

**I am a Mestiza.** The term mestizo is used to describe people of mixed ancestry, that is, white European and Indigenous ancestry. I was born in the year of the unearthing of the magnificent Aztec moon goddess Coyolxauqui. This relationship to the ancient roots of my identity as a Mexican recognizes a story of conquest that connects Latin-Americans and, in many ways, the younger generations of Latinx.

**I am a Latina with a strong connection to the Latinx conceptualization.** I am a woman from Latin America that finds a strong relationship with the Latinx conceptualization of this new era. It is the revitalization of the progressive term that evolved from the term Hispanic, which in no way I identify. Ed Morales (2018) recognizes the arrival of the Latinx term in the middle of the politics of race and ethnicity. Moreover, he mentions that Latinx people are "often erased from America's founding narrative" (p. 3). He continues to state that Latinx has always been present in the story of America as "a crucial counter-narrative, a people that live in a world of many worlds, possessing and identity, and multiple identities" (p. 3).

**I am an Immigrant.** I came to the US in 2005. I was privileged to be admitted to this country legally. Not exactly the case of the 11.3 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States as recorded by the Migration Policy Institute. However, the urgency of rapid acculturation pressed by American society affects me, too.

**I am Bilingual... and a half.** Spanish is my mother-tongue. I learned a second language at the age of 18, thanks to an opportunity that changed my view of the world completely. German was the foreign language I officially learned in my youth. I took classes and lived in the country for a year as an AuPair, or nanny. Then, I learned English with the help of my dear friend Sally B., and the songs of the great British band, The Beatles.

**I am a Wife.** I married in my late twenties, defying the odds of young marriage. For years women in my country have often been mocked by family and friends when they are not married in their late teens or early 20's. I am an independent, strong married woman. I am happy to share my life with a kind, supportive partner.

**I am a Mother.** I am the joyous mother of Aidan Sebastian, a 12-year-old, creative middle-schooler. I only want the best for my child and want him to have the opportunities our past generations did not have. I wish for him to continue our story in higher education and our legacy in the world.

**I am a Daughter.** I am the daughter of Grandmother and Mother. I was born in a single-mother household, that for the time, it was considered sinful and immoral. Despite that veil that society placed upon my mother, she taught me with her actions that hard work, education, and integrity would take me many places.

**I am a First-Generation College Graduate.** I am the first in my family to attain a master's degree. My grandmother had limited literacy and numeracy skills, and my mother completed elementary school. She has a six-grade education.

**I am a First-Generation Professional.** My family comes from a very modest upbringing. My ancestors were sugar cane farmers, bakers, shoemakers, and housekeepers. I am the first in my family to hold a leadership role in the professional field. During my professional career, I had the opportunity to work in various management level roles. One of those roles was director of the intergenerational family program where I served the families participants of this study. My past role as the director of the program and student success coach of the two graduates

interviewed here might present possible bias. I explain how I foresee to avoid that further in this section.

During my years in spaces of higher education, I was intrigued to learn more about the relationship between the success of first-generation graduates and the construction of knowledge in their families. I made these observations as a result of my work with families and their first-generation students in higher education, mainly from my job at the university as an academic success coach. My work was centered on culturally relevant approaches to academic achievement, and my community and civic engagement work with Latino families.

These interactions led me to wonder about the connections of the funds of knowledge of these families and the relationship with intergenerational and lifelong learning. There is no doubt that a result of these experiences, I asked myself about the importance of culturally relevant curriculum and programs to support immigrant families in their education pathway. My positionality as a researcher here is my wondering on intergenerational learning and its possible connection to college graduation of Latinx.

Many things in this world spark my curiosity and nurture my sense of wonder. I have mentioned throughout this document, there is one instance in particular that intrigues me. I often wondered about my grandmother's wisdom. She always had an answer to everything, even to the most unconventional questions. Her low literacy skills did not tame her wisdom and her love for learning. Grandma was a lifelong learner who possessed a strong sense of wonder. Reflecting on the ways she acted and responded to our questions, I am convinced that she learned everything she knew from her connections with nature, survival, and the wisdom of her ancestors. This

wisdom was passed on to us through her. This is what I later recognized as intergenerational learning.

Therefore, my positionality centers in that sense of wonder (Lukenchuk, 2013). The sense of wonder is the heart of all research, and with that, the playful energy of curiosity comes along. Centering myself in that wondrous sense, I want to learn from parents who participated in an intergenerational family program what are those key elements that encouraged or gave them pertinent information so that they could better understand the system of education in this country. Furthermore, the stories of the Latino parents and their Latinx children are the center of this research. My life experiences and identities connect with the participants in various ways.

Based on the relationships with the families and their experience in higher education, the exploration of the significance of intergenerational family learning programs and college completion of Latinx first-generation students is my focus. Along with that, I want to shed more light on the importance of lifelong learning among the immigrant Latino community in the U.S.

These topics intertwine in my personal story. They intersect with my identities and experiences. My interest in researching the connections between intergenerational family learning, lifelong learning, and college completion among Latinx has been prevalent in my professional practice and my relationship with education. Moreover, the topic of intergenerational learning is relevant to the understanding of how knowledge is passed on from generation to generation. My lifelong relationship with it has developed my conviction that it also serves as a means for resilience, support, empowerment, compassion, and advancement of vulnerable groups of people.

My readers must know that my research represents a strong connection between my identities as a Mexican immigrant, Latina, first-generation graduate, my values, my culture, my language, my ancestors, and my story. These elements are important to note as the research was conducted with Latino families who are immigrants, speak Spanish as a first language, have similar value systems, and share a similar history.

I desire to advocate for culturally relevant programs, honor people's identities, and embrace the tradition of intergenerational learning. As a first-generation graduate and soon to be added to the less than 1% of Latino doctoral degree earners (Santiago, 2015), it is my obligation to serve as an advocate to my community. With this said, the balance between my personal experience and my story is important. To stay true to the fidelity of the results of this research, constant acts of reflexivity were necessary. In addition to the recognition of my own positionality. Saldaña and Omasta (2018) note that "the researcher situates himself or herself within the study to reflect his or her story, culture and personal experiences" (p. 49). The recognition of my positionality provides readers with a whole picture of who I am as a researcher, and as a member of the community, I am researching. This statement encompasses my self-awareness in this study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical issues in qualitative research can happen at any point in the entire study and up to the final report (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kvale, 2007; Seidman, 2019). As part of a complex world, researchers must think about the potential ethical challenges that can arise during the research process.

Seidman (2019) refers to Aristotle and his idea of virtue as a fundamental of ethics. He explains that for Aristotle, the principles of morality are supported by behaviors and human performance of tasks that are well and rightly done. I find this allusion fascinating and applicable to my own understanding of ethics. I hold integrity in the utmost regard. As we know historically, humankind has been looking for ways to do good, in this example, to act virtuously. The mere act of virtue in the research process entitles researchers to guidelines that aim to encourage the doing of the research "well and right." This precise explanation of the intertwining of ethics and methodology comes in handy as I reflect on the ethics of my study.

Interviewers' work of making contact, establishing access, selecting participants, setting up interviews, arrangements, seeking informed consent, interviewing participants, managing the relationship between interviewer and participant, and working with and sharing the words that result from interviewing can be done according to each task's internal logic, and done "well and rightly" (Seidman, 2019, p. 148).

Therefore, I reiterate my relationship with the participants in this study, the parents and youth who I interviewed attended an intergenerational family program in 2015 and 2016 during the time I served as the director of the program. In those times, I had the opportunity to build rapport with the families and created a space where a sense of belonging was a primer. Two of the college graduates I knew from their undergraduate studies, as they were part of the group of students who I served as a student success coach. Two of the mothers are from the same elementary school where the classes took place. These connections with the families are cordial, and some of the interviewees continue to be in communication with me. They come to me with questions, or we come across at community events.

Equally important is the confidentiality of these families. The IRB document is a way to preserve the safety of the participants. Researchers are mandated to submit a thorough record. Kvale (2007) explains that the document is an informed consent that notifies the research participants about the overall purpose of the study, the main features of the design, and the possible risks and benefits from their participation in the project. See Appendix III, IV, V, and VI. Each selected individual received the IRB informed consent. The three families remain anonymous. The names and last names of participants were changed to maintain their confidentiality. In the data collection, I transcribed the interviews verbatim. I went over the information with the participants for suggestions and fidelity. I transcribed the recordings from Spanish. All records and transcripts of the records were always in my possession. I informed the Spanish language participants that the interviews needed to be translated, and the information included in the final report was going to be in English. To conclude, I wrote personal reflections in my researcher's journal at the end of each interview to gather my insights, find connections, and explore the emotions these stories evoked in me.

The participants voluntarily consented to participate in the study. I reminded them of their right to remove themselves from it at any time. Creswell & Poth (2019) underline the fact that researchers must be respectful to their participants. Researchers have to let participants know about their right to confidentiality, who has access to the information and documents, and how much information should be given and when. They state that “qualitative researchers need to be mindful of protecting the participants’ privacy through masking their names and developing composite profiles or cases” (p. 57).

All things considered, I remark to my readers that I uphold values that my family taught me growing up, and that continues to be a compass for the decisions I make every day. My core

values define me as a person, and I am sure they will describe me as a researcher. In the end, along with the IRB, the researcher is “critical for the quality of the scientific knowledge and the soundness of ethical decisions in an interview inquiry” (Brinkman & Kvale, 2018, p. 33).

### **Summary of Chapter Three**

This chapter presented the methodology and research design used in this research. My research is centered on a narrative study. Storytelling is at the core of the analysis. This study intends to understand how intergenerational family learning programs can be a catalyst in the attainment of higher education of Latinx, first-generation college youth. The understanding of the American education system, a culturally relevant curriculum, and the means to engage in spaces of intergenerational family, and lifelong learning opportunities might provide a chance to increase higher education in Latino families. It was conducted with the support of three Latino families that participated in intergenerational family programs in 2013, 2015, and 2016. The family programs were offered to families with students in elementary school and high school; however, some had children in a community college or university in the freshmen year.

First, I provided a succinct description of qualitative research and narrative research as they are the guiding elements of this study. Second, I introduce some facts about the participants, data collection procedures and data analysis. The data gathering tools used in this study were individual and family semi-structured interviews. The interviews were semi-structured. It was essential to have the participants share their stories and experiences in the family learning program. The interviews were transcribed and the Spanish only interviews were translated. I used coding in the analysis of the data. The analysis was based on predetermined categories and

in-vivo codes that emerged from the literature review and the conversations with participants. These codes constructed the analysis of themes.

Third, I noted documents and artifacts as important elements in the data collection process because, during the interviews, some participants shared pictures from their children's graduation, their graduation from the family program, certificates, songs, and family pictures. Furthermore, this chapter explains in-depth my role as a researcher and presents the reader with my identities as a form of reflexivity. Finally, I described validity and trustworthiness and explained ethical considerations. For personal reflection, I kept a reflective journal. The journal helped me capture my thoughts on the ways I performed the interviews, and in documenting any surprises. It allowed me to emerge in a critical, thoughtful process.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Data Collection**

Therefore I decided to leave  
The country (Aztlán),  
Therefore I have come as one charged with a  
special duty... (Huitzilopochtli, as cited in Anzaldúa, 2007, p.53)

I begin this chapter with the words of the Aztec god Huitzilopochtli speaking to the Azteca-Mexica. They are special, not only because of the importance of this particular deity in the story and history of Mexicans but for the resonance of these words in the immigrant family story. Huitzilopochtli guided the migration of the Aztecs from their home, Aztlán, to the Valley of Mexico, now the capital of the Mexican Republic. To this day, Huitzilopochtli's message connects to the stories of millions of Mexican immigrants who followed his words and the whisper of the northern wind. According to the Pew Research Center, 36.6 million people of Mexican origin lived in the United States in 2017.

The following chapter analyses the stories of three Latinx, Mexican immigrant families who shared their experiences navigating the American education system and their participation in different cohorts of an intergenerational family program. Therefore, I present individual stories as my intention is to create space for each selected member of the family to tell their story. I also present family stories. These bring together a family narrative that illustrates their immigrant experiences, hopes, and struggles in the United States.

### **Pictures of Immigrant Families: Intergenerational Knowledge Sharing, Resilience, and Hopes**

This section introduces the three families that participated in this research: Hernandez, Garcia, and Martinez. Their conversations enriched this work and allowed me to enter their

homes in a non-conventional way. I am grateful to know these families; we met some years ago. They participated in different cohorts of a program I started alongside committed educators and community leaders in Chicago. The first cohort of families involved in the Academy of Parents in Leadership (APL) was born from the urgency of parents to find solutions and answers after the decision of Mayor Rahm Emmanuel to close 49 Chicago Public Schools (CPS) in 2013 claiming budget deficit. Most striking, but not surprising, was the fact that many of these schools were located in underprivileged neighborhoods affecting Latino and African American communities.

Parents from a few CPS public school's networks met several times in the basement of a community-based organization in the neighborhood. They needed to express their concerns and frustrations. At that time, a group of members from the university I was working with and the community organization started a conversation on ways to support these families. We met several times to explore possibilities and to gather information to better answer their questions. Then the idea of a parent program surged. The parent program was to focus on community organizing and leadership. Our collective thinking appeared on the whiteboards of the small basement in the community organization headquarters.

The program continued to evolve as we reached more families in different communities in the city and the suburbs. It was becoming a small movement. We engaged more and more community organizations across the city and the suburbs. As a result of the program, we hosted the university's first Spanish-only conference for families with high school juniors and seniors. To this day, it continues to be featured each April at the institution's suburban campus. Our first parent conference inspired another university in Lake County. With our initial counsel, they hosted their Latino parent conference, they have done so since 2016.

In this research, I describe each family and capture a time in the day that illustrates the family dynamics. Each family is pictured at a different time of the day. Even though I was not able to spend some time with them in their homes, the families shared their usual days as they happened before the pandemic. Subsequently, I present the stories of the individuals who participated in the interviews individually.

In the following table, I summarize some characteristics of the interviewees to make a connection with the families that supported this research and to provide context to their stories. Table 4.1 presents the profile of each participant and each family. It includes the assigned fictional family name and the pseudonym of the family members who participated in the individual and family interviews. The family role identifies the part they play in the family dynamics while homeland refers to the place of birth or the place they identify with as being their home. Nationality means the place they hold a passport to; this could be only one, or more than one as some members have dual citizenship. The number of years in the US identifies the total number of years living in this country uninterrupted. Age gives an idea of where these participants are generationally, and marital status denotes the relation of the members of the family in civil society. The level of education situates individuals in a specific space in the education system. To identify the level of education of the people whose education was completed in Mexico specifically, refer to appendix I which provides an illustration of the Mexican education system from World Education News and Reviews (2019) and a table with a detailed explanation of the education system by levels. Furthermore, the first language refers to the mother tongue. In the case of bilingual members, it denotes the language first spoken at the home. English proficiency identifies the level of fluidity in which the foreign language is spoken and comprehended. Occupation represents the industry in the workforce, home, or education role

in the case of students. The financial role identifies the filing status of the individuals, only if applicable, and provides information on their financial responsibility in the home. Finally, annual income gives information about their position in US Federal poverty guidelines as issued by the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Table 4.1. A Profile of the Research Participants

	The Hernandez Family			The Garcia's Family		The Martinez's Family		
Pseudonym	Lupe	Andrea	Martha	Juan	Nina	Rosa	José	Laura
Family Role	Mother	Daughter	Mother	Father	Daughter	Mother	Son	Daughter
Homeland	Michoacán, Mexico	Chicago, IL	Mexico, DF	Mexico, DF	Chicago, IL	Chiapas, Mexico	Guanajuato, Mexico	Guanajuato, Mexico
Nationality	Mexican	American, Mexican	Mexican	Mexican	American	Mexican	Mexican	Mexican
Years in US	21	N/A	18	18	N/A	17	17	17
Age	45	22	49	47	16	48	27	25
Marital Status	Married	Single	Married	Married	Single	Married	Single	Single
Level of Education	Technical Education 12 grade	College Senior	Lower secondary education 9 grade	Lower secondary education 9 grade	Highschool Sophomore	Elementary education 6 grade	Bachelors Degree	Bachelors Degree
First Language	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish
English Proficiency	Basic	Bilingual	Low	Low	Bilingual	Low	Bilingual	Bilingual
Occupation	Babysitter	Student	Homemaker	Autos	Student	Food	Restaurant Manager	Financial advisor
Financial role	Head of household. Husband is disabled	Dependent, works part time job to support studies	Dependent	Head of Household	Dependent	Dependent	Independent, provides some support to parents	Independent, provides some support to parents
Annual Income	18 thousand	5 thousand	N/A	25 thousand	N/A	N/A	45 thousand	48 thousand

Moreover, the narratives revealed seven common themes that surged from our conversations. These were a) intergenerational learning; b) school and community engagement; c) obstacles navigating the education system; d) values; e) culture; f) continuous education, and g) motivation. Families shared their hopes for the Latinx community in a supplementary section. This section created a space for an additional tone, perhaps a palpable familiarity or a channel for empathy.

Finally, the analysis of the data presented the common themes in quotes. The participants' words were categorized by themes according to the relationship with each of them. More detailed information on the analysis of this data is provided in Chapter 5 on table 5.2 which presents the participants by pseudonym and their quotes by theme.

### ***The Hernandez Family: Stories of Warrior Women and Strength***

A typical day in the modest northwest small two-bedroom apartment, home to the Hernandez family starts with a 5:00 am alarm clock, waking up Mrs. Hernandez. She prepares a pot of coffee with a hint cinnamon, a favorite of the family. I can say, it is a must in the homes of Mexican families. The smell wakes up Andrea, the oldest of two. Before breakfast, the sounds in the kitchen are followed by the sounds of the blow dryer and the cries urging everyone to hurry. Everyone gets out the door, almost running to avoid the late minute that could jeopardize missing the school bus and the packed northbound CTA red line train.

The Hernandez are strong, caring women. They always have been, but on the day of Mr. Hernandez's accident they had to become stronger to the point of developing some sort of "superpowers." Suddenly, Mr. Hernandez was not able to be the provider for the home anymore. The unfortunate accident left him with an uneasy spine and unable to work anymore.

Lupe, the mother, Andrea, the oldest daughter, and Ana, the youngest, quickly became the foundation of their home. Lupe took over the breadwinner's responsibility, and the daughters supported their mother with some of the house chores. Life right after the accident was difficult for them, in particular for Mr. Hernandez. "He saw his world fall apart, all the efforts he put into offering us a better life vanished." That is how Lupe recounts her husband's sorrow.

It has been seven years since Lupe became the head of the Hernandez household, taking babysitting jobs. She continues raising other people's children and continues to raise her daughters. This job comes naturally to her as she helped raise her siblings in Mexico. She also tells me how much she has learned since she started being more involved in the school and the community, "before, my experience was limited, I only could tell my potential employers that I was a mother. Now, I tell them that I am qualified because I can show them my certificates from the programs I attended." Though, Lupe shares that the job is unstable and sometimes there are not many children to care for. Her babysitting job and the limited funds her husband receives from his disability benefits combine \$18,000 in annual income.

**Lupe Hernandez.** Lupe is a 45-year-old mother. She immigrated from Mexico in 1995 right after her wedding at the age of 22. She has two daughters, ages 22 and 12. Lupe has been living in Chicago for 25 years.

I invited Lupe and her oldest daughter, Andrea to participate in this research. I wanted to learn more about their experiences and everything they could tell me about the reasons they seem to be always on the go. When I met Lupe in 2016, her smile overcame me. I appreciated her smile as it was an inviting way for me to smile too. Lupe was always smiling but when a thought or conversation from the lessons or the speaker struck her, her smile rapidly faded and became a

frown or a spark in her eyes. Her valuable contributions to the class were welcomed by the other parents in the sessions. Because of her performance in the parent program, I considered her to be a curious learner. I established a good relationship with her, her family, and the families from the school that she attended and completed the program in 2016.

The interview took place online using the Zoom platform and was conducted in Spanish. I translated the interview from Spanish to English capturing her responses in the most accurate way possible. As our interview started, Lupe and her smile greeted me. Lupe took the interview in her daughters' room where their computer is located. Andrea helped set up the meeting, as Lupe was not confident in using the technology. We met on a Saturday evening after she had finished her chores at home. The family was entertained in the living room. Our conversation started with a merry greeting. I thanked Lupe for her time and voluntary participation in the interview. I reiterated the research study's purposes and confidentiality.

Lupe began with a memory of the first time she was involved in a parent-led effort in support of the children of her neighborhood's school. She was part of a parent patrol. This resulted from the worry of the parents about the safety of their children going to school on foot. She recounts how initially ten parents organized to cover the perimeter of the school to prevent children, especially the older ones, to engage in activities that could potentially put them in danger. The parents focused on the three blocks where most criminal activity concentrated. She tells me that the criminal activity was not so apparent until the parent patrol was at work.

She said, "We realized that drugs were sold to the eighth-graders, and all those cars that were strolling around the school did not belong to the neighbors. After these people realized that we were protecting the kids from the neighborhood and contacting the police, they left." Her

involvement in the parent patrol earned her a recognition that she holds dear. Lupe's eyes brighten and her smile enlarges as she takes me back to that day when she met Mayor Richard Daley.

I received an acknowledgment from the Mayor. God gave me the blessing of speaking to a crowd. I was the only Hispanic mother that was recognized that day. I was shaking as I shared my experiences in the two languages. I was the only Hispanic among hundreds of American and African American parents. That was an experience I will never forget.

Lupe remembers the first time she got involved in a parent program. This program was focused on the continuing support for parents with children to prevent substance abuse. She continues: "Right after that, there was an association that came to the school— somewhat the same way you came to the school Monica— and they gave us workshops and they followed our children from six to eighth grade, for three years so that they would not get involved before high school and in high school in smoking or alcoholism. All that was a process of education for us as parents."

The result of her participation in that program started her family's engagement in the community. Families gathered and worked together to beautify the spaces around the school grounds. She continues to explain how the experience felt and how the families accomplished their goal.

I felt good about coming together. It was nice, even my husband came, I brought him along, he is a gardener. He volunteered to work in the garden and in the community removing the trash and help plant flowers. In the end, all around was green, the park and

other areas near the school looked beautiful. We restored our community because we wanted our children and youth to be in a good environment and beautiful space.

Lupe's smile widens in front of the camera. Then, I asked her why she became involved in the Academy of Parents in Leadership and she resumed sharing a lesson from her mother.

My mother told all her daughters and sons that the person who does not study is like a person that does not see. That is my motto, the person who does not study is like a blind person. If one has the opportunity to study, do not lose that opportunity. I keep telling that to my daughters. God willing, I will continue telling them that until the day I die. My parents did not go to school, but they knew how important education was. They always knew how to motivate us to study.

Because of this motivation, her parents instilled in her and her siblings, she continues to find ways to learn. She became involved in APL because she wanted to learn more to help her daughters in school. She tells me that she did not realize that starting the program was going to encourage her to consider continuing her own education. Lupe completed the program and she shares the outcome of her participation, "I do not want to lose sight of what I started, I am currently taking classes to complete my GED, I am studying for me, I still have a long way to go but I will achieve my goal" and she laughs again.

When I asked her to share about a topic or module in the family program that was useful to her and her family, she mentioned that the topic related to college and finances was important for her. She shared that at that time the topic was relevant because her oldest daughter was in her senior year of high school. She remembers:

We were taught about the necessary steps for kids to get into college and with that some of the finances. We were taught that economically, we parents can open a bank account, and how to do that. That opens the knowledge of the parents, and it is nice to have someone show us how to do those things that are complicated for us. It was important for me to have the support of someone who guided us not only by talking but teaching us the ways to be financially prepared and have financial solvency despite the little money we might have. That session opened my eyes so that my daughters have a path to success not only to high school but beyond.

Lupe's learning experience, as she vividly tells us, opened her eyes. It gave her the assurance she needed. She recognized that despite their financial situation, her daughters had the chance to attend college. In my experience working with families, for many Latinx parents, financial aid is a difficult topic when it comes to paying for college. Indeed, understanding financial aid and the details about student loans and grants is complex. Various factors need to be considered in an award of financial assistance.

Next, I highlight the Federal Pell Grant due to its importance to financially limited families. The award is only offered to undergraduate students who prove critical financial needs. In the academic year 2011-2012, 50% of Latino undergraduates received a Pell Grant, compared to 62% of African Americans, 54% of American Indians, 34% of Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 34% of White undergraduates as reported by Excelencia in Education (2017). This shows the increasing need for financial support of Latinx students enrolled in higher education institutions, and the urgency to provide thorough, bilingual financial aid information for families of prospective undergraduates not only in their last year in high school but steadily and early in the education pathway.

Lupe expresses her optimism,

Andrea is a senior in college now. The experiences we had with her and the information I got from the sessions in the Parents in Leadership program gave me the basis to help my youngest daughter have a better experience in college. Now we know there are scholarships, Ana got a scholarship for a private middle school she is attending now. Andrea has scholarships that helped us with her tuition, and I have a small amount of money that I am saving for Ana's college, as I had for Andrea.

**Andrea Hernandez.** Andrea is a very busy young woman. We met right after the interview with her mother. Her mother calls her to the room, they switch seats, and her mother leaves the room. We start with a greeting and a remark about how quickly time passes. I met her when she was still in high school and thinking about becoming a teacher.

She is 22 years old now. I remind her about the purpose of my research, confidentiality, and the volunteer nature of the interview. She consents again. I asked her in which language she wished to be interviewed. She preferred the interview to be in English. I start the recording and open the conversation encouraging her to tell me about herself. Andrea was born and raised in Chicago. She tells me about her family and college. As she shared more about her college experience, she mentions with a smile on her face, that she will be graduating from a Chicago based four-year university in the fall quarter of this year. She was in her last year of high school when we met. At that time, she was exploring possibilities for higher education.

Andrea's choice was to attend community college. "It was difficult for me to understand what was next for me," she said. She tells me about her confusion and her dilemma, "I wanted to

get my education, but I also wanted something my family could afford, I was afraid of the amount of money I would have to borrow, universities are expensive”.

Personally, throughout my career in higher education, I heard and sensed the same fear Andrea expressed during the interview. Indeed, first-generation students are concerned about the financial burden that a college degree represents to them and their families. For example, data from *Excelencia in Education* (2008) shows that in 2007-2008, the Expected Family Contribution (EFC), in other words, the measure of the financial strength of a family, for Latino undergraduates (\$9,966) was lower than the EFC for all undergraduates (\$13,524) and all groups, except African Americans (\$ 8,697). In the same way, the average financial aid awarded to Latino undergraduates (\$7,925) was lower than the average for all undergraduates (\$9,114).

The fact that financial aid awards less money on average to Latinx, supports Andrea’s concern and narrowed down her options. Right after her high school graduation, Andrea started attending general education classes at a local community college and after two years completed an associate degree in liberal arts.

She continues the conversation telling me more about her parents and how she felt about their aspiration for her to continue to college immediately after high school. “My parents, when I finished high school, they wanted me to go to college right away. But I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do instead of going to an expensive school I went to community college.”

Unlike immigrant, undocumented students, Andrea is FAFSA eligible. This means that she can apply for loans from the Department of Education which will be repaid at low interest six months after graduation. I believe, this point is important to note as there are Latinx students

who do not have this financial aid opportunity. In my opinion, this also shows the disparity of the current financial aid system.

After completing an associate degree in liberal arts at a local community college, she continued and transferred to a four-year university in the pursuit of a bachelor's degree. Andrea mentioned that she has received a few scholarships to cover some of her tuition, and her part-time job helps her with related college costs, such as books or materials.

Furthermore, she expressed her views on the lack of support for parents and young people considering college in the understanding of the next steps in entering higher education.

Underrepresented students need more scholarships available. I can apply to FAFSA but I still need financial support. If it would not be for my scholarships, I would have a different college experience. Unfortunately, we do not have the money for those ivy colleges, but I did what I could, and it is important for financial policies to improve and include Latinos and African Americans we suffer from lack of financial support in school.

Along with that, Andrea points out that Latino parents need to be included in the higher education experience. She suggested that parents need to be provided with opportunities in the school and then in the university systems, so they learn more about how college works. This preparation would help their students when it comes to difficult decisions such as financial aid. She said that:

It is important for parents to be involved, but it is important for schools and universities to have events in Spanish. Parents need to know what is going on in their children's schools, and they [the universities] do not really explain how to obtain scholarships or

how people can go and do research. It is hard to find that information on your own. It would be harder for families in the future if schools and universities don't come up with programs, so they know how to financially support their kids, and how to do online research, find scholarships, write the essays. Parents would be able to support their kids and give input and help students to obtain scholarships, it would be a benefit to us.

Andrea not only expressed her views on financial aid and how to prepare to navigate that, but she also spoke about the ways her family has supported her throughout her higher education. The involvement of her parents in her academic experience has been robust. The way her parents have supported her and her sister is an additional testimony in the dismantling of the negative perception that has been perpetuated over time around the neglect of Latinx families in the education of their children.

They've always gone to school events I had, they went to the open house, school fairs. My mom's always gone with me, and she leaves work early or my dad takes care of my little sister or vice versa. When I had to do long nights of homework they've always given me my space so I can concentrate on what I am doing and I feel all these things encourage me and by them acting that way they make me want to finish my degree not only for me but for them. It is very important for me to make them proud.

She shares how her mother has encouraged her by her example. Her mom decided to learn English. "My mom has gone to school to learn English, me seeing her progress the way she has made the person I am now." Now that Andrea is close to attaining her first higher education degree, she says that she will be pursuing a master's, "they've always supported me; they've

always encouraged me to keep on going. Even after my bachelor's, they will push me to get my masters”.

The Hernandezes narratives describe their struggles, their motivation, and the actions they took to thrive. They indicated challenges not only in the navigation of the American education system but also in the adjustment to life in the US. Some of these struggles were low English proficiency, sudden illness and disability, and the lack of adequate financial aid resources for college. They shared their motivation to continue learning, for Mrs. Hernandez, it is the fact that continuous learning gives her self-confidence and extra qualifications for her work. For instance, she shared an important event in her life, and that was addressing a crowd of parents and receiving recognition from the mayor of the city. Andrea’s motivation is to attain her degree. They have taken actions to thrive and move forward. Lupe is enrolled in GED classes, and Andrea shared that her mother’s actions have given her the inspiration to guide her own.

### ***The Garcia Family: Stories of Love and Mutual Respect***

It is 2:45 pm. Martha gets ready to jump in her immaculate gray van. She carries a backpack on her shoulder. She drives from the family home on the west side of the city to her daughter’s high school. After 30 minutes on the road, she meets Nina at their usual meeting place. It is Tuesday; it means that they are heading to the community music program Nina participates in. She is in the choir. Martha finds a parking spot on the busy street and walks with Nina to the building where the classes are held. She patiently waits for her daughter to end her lessons while checking on her emails. After the choir, they head back home. At the kitchen of their third-floor, two-bedroom apartment, the ceremony for dinner begins with Martha’s favorite tunes, but sometimes Nina takes over with some of the US top 10 hits on Spotify. Then, Nina

gets a snack and gets to her room to do some homework or to take a quick nap. Mr. Martinez gets home at around 7 pm and joins the family for dinner. On occasions, their oldest daughters and their children come to visit. Dinner is a time for them to share the happenings of the day with their daughters and grandsons.

The Garcia's are a busy family. Martha is a stay at home mom and Juan works for a small auto mechanic business. They have three daughters and two grandsons. They soon will welcome their third grandchild, another baby boy. Their oldest daughters are 28 and 27, they are married. Nina is 16 years old. The family has an annual income of \$25,000.00. They are considered living under the US poverty line established by the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). I invited the Garcia's to participate in this research. I wanted to learn from their experiences raising their daughters in a different education system while having scarce resources to help them academically. Their youngest daughter is preparing to go to college. This research includes the voices of Martha Garcia, Juan Garcia, and Nina Garcia. Here, I begin with Martha.

**Martha Garcia.** Martha is a 49-year-old mother and grandmother. She is an immigrant from Mexico with a middle school level of education. She grew up in a small town on the outskirts of the big city capital. She comes from a humble family of six. She shared her desire to continue her education after ninth grade, but the difficult circumstances did not allow her to do so. She opened up about her young marriage, motherhood, and history of domestic violence.

I only finish school until ninth grade, unfortunately in my country, it is difficult to go to university. I wanted to stay in school, but it was too far away and sometimes I didn't even have the money for bus fare. Then, I got married to my first husband and had two

daughters. I tried to study and attempted to complete the adult education program with my two daughters, but I had no money. Then, I became a single mother because of the conflicts that wanting to study and wanting a better future for my daughters caused in my marriage. I come from a very humble and dysfunctional family. I always wanted to change that for my daughters and look for a better development opportunity in their emotional life and their economic life. In my hometown, it was very difficult for a single mother to survive. I wanted to study and get ahead, but I did not have any kind of support.

She goes on to share that during that difficult time, she and Juan got together again and decided to form a family. She shares her experience in adjusting to the school system.

So, I decided to come over here with my new husband. It wasn't easy to get here with two girls and not speaking the language. It was hard for me to get involved in school with them because I had to work and pay attention to their school. Besides, I didn't have family support here in Chicago, my sister lives in Georgia. It was difficult for us as a new family, in a new country, but we still tried to be very optimistic.

She continued talking about her experience trying to navigate the education system. She moved on to converse about her experience in the Academy of Parents in Leadership. Martha participated in APL in 2015. She shared what impacted her the most in the program.

Before she resumes the conversation, she moves away from the camera and searches for something. She pulls out a notebook and puts it in front of the camera. It is the notebook she used during the program. She exclaimed, "I have everything written down!" and pointed out to her blue notebook. She said with an enthusiastic tone, "in fact I have the exact words from the

professor that most impacted me written down here”. Then, she starts the conversation with a traditional saying:

In my country we say, *el buen juez por su casa empieza* –the good judge starts by judging his own home. I had to start my family involvement in my home. I couldn’t pass on my knowledge to other parents, or give them any advice; first, I had to do it for myself, and with my daughter. Otherwise, no one was going to believe my experience. In the program, I learned to advocate for my family and me, and search for what I wanted. There were a lot of people in that program who impacted me, especially this professor who told us his story and how he never gave up on his son. This special professor told the parents about the value we have as Hispanics. That professor told us about the importance of understanding how education works in this country. When you know all that, you can cross all the borders.

In her comments, Martha highlights motivation, empowerment, and inspiration. In my experience, these components appeared to be crucial in the intergenerational family program. This might be due to the sense of reassurance, recognition, and empathy they created among the parent groups. It seemed that Martha could connect with the program facilitators through the stories they shared, they were humanized in front of her eyes. Latinx parents regard teachers and school administrators by their knowledge or position. Rodriguez-Brown (2010) points out that Latinx parents show great respect for teachers and schools. She states that “Latino parents believe that teachers know more about how to teach (*enseñar*), and they have special ways of knowledge to teach children” (p.352). The perception Latino parents have about teachers puts parents at a disadvantage because they are not able to realize the knowledge they possess. In

addition, schools are not good at recognizing the prior knowledge and life experience that parents possess. To allow for knowledge sharing, I believe teachers, facilitators, professors, and school administrators must find ways to establish a more human connection with Latino parents.

On that note, I remember when Martha started the program she was rather quiet. As time went by, she became more outspoken. There are two Marthas I got to know. One who spoke at a minimum, or just the necessary during the first sessions, and another one with broad shoulders and confidence. The second one is more present today, the Martha that projects a presence that resonates in the room. She said that the program gave her a sense of empowerment. She shared that her mentor from the program encouraged her to “grab my wings and expand my world”. Her mentor’s motivation gave her the reassurance she needed, “I had knowledge to share”.

With that motivation, she became more involved in the school, participated in the school’s council, and learned more about resources for her daughter. “I learned a lot about what education is, I felt empowered and very competent. I understood a lot of what the teachers referred to because I learned that in the parent classes with the professors who came every week.” She also mentions that she would have liked to have learned about the education system, resources, and her own potential earlier. “I would have liked to be in a parent program, like the one I participated in, where I learned to be a leader, long ago. If I had participated in family programs, and other programs like that one [intergenerational program], my oldest daughters would have had a chance”. Moll (1992) and Valdes (1996) believe that Latino parents lack familiarity with the educational system in the United States (as cited in Rodriguez-Brown, 2010, p. 352). Therefore, intergenerational family programs and parent engagement programs should be included as opportunities schools offer to Latino parents. The families interviewed in this research find that the American system of education is not easy to understand.

In like manner, Martha mentioned that the American education system is complex. There are things she and her husband do not quite understand, particularly because schools do not provide materials or explanations in Spanish.

As the interview continues, Martha commented on the way her oldest daughter interacts with her now. It is worth noting the dynamic she shared. This shows the organic way of intergenerational learning.

My biggest gift is knowing that my daughter took upon what I learned to advocate for her children. My daughter comes to me when she has a problem with her children's school. My daughter puts that trust in me because she knows I'm going to help her find alternatives for my grandchildren. They both have IEP's [individual education plans]. My daughter has been very involved in the school. She serves on the committees and participates in activities. The result we're seeing with my grandson is that despite having an IEP, he has good grades and that's rewarding for me as a grandmother. No matter if your son has different ways of learning, when one knows about resources, knows one's rights, and believes in children, things can be different.

We continued to be in touch after she graduated from the program. Martha volunteers with community organizations that support underrepresented communities. She is an active member of the community and she is always looking for resources and information to share with others.

Now I share my experience with other parents in the community organization. My community is made up of Latinos and African Americans. We talk about different topics that afflict us, some of them are mental health and education. I wish we all could go to a

university to a family program like the one I participated in, if we had the opportunity, I know that many children would benefit from that.

Martha has participated in many meetings and events since her graduation from the APL program. She and I presented together with another parent at the Illinois Resource Center Summit for Bilingual Parents in 2015. She became a fierce advocate. I recently had a meeting with Martha, she was asking for the possibility to partner with the community service center at a local university. Her commitment to her community and other families is remarkable. Her resourcefulness and leadership have gained her respect and admiration in numerous community spaces.

**Juan García.** He is a 47-year-old father and grandfather of three. He is the oldest of eight. His father unloaded merchandise in the big city market and his mother cared for the home and the children. Her mother saved some money and bought a sewing machine which she used to do minor alterations. She tailored clothes for the family and people in the neighborhood.

He lived in a humble home and due to the needs his family had, he started working in his early adolescence years. He attended school on and off until he completed middle school. The completion of his secondary education took him from his preteen years until he officially became an adult. In Mexico, individuals are considered adults when they reach the age of 18. He completed 9<sup>th</sup> grade at the official adult age. He was 18 when he graduated from middle school.

Juan migrated from his natal Mexico City, in 1994, at the age of 21. At that time, his brother who lived in Quintana Roo passed by Mexico City visiting the family. Juan was encouraged by the idea of more opportunities. Right after that, he decided to “*probar suerte en el norte*” –prove some luck in the north for the first time. He came to the United States and worked

for six years but decided to go back because he was extremely homesick. He stayed in Mexico for a couple of years, but the lack of opportunity pushed him to cross the border one more time in 2002. During the last year of his stay in Mexico, he endured a divorce and then found Martha. They knew each other from their childhood. They went to school together then. Juan and Martha became friends again and started dating. A short time thereafter, they decided to start a family.

Once more, the lack of opportunities and the need to provide a better life to his new family were the deciding factors to retake the dangerous route to the north. The arms of poverty made him leave his newly formed family behind. Juan ventured through the desert and made it passed the border. He arrived in Texas and moved on further to the Midwest. In Chicago, he found a job and a place to stay, to his surprise months later he found himself traveling back south to reunite with his family. Martha and the children were waiting for him in Atlanta; they had crossed the border.

Their journey as a family continued in Chicago, soon the family realized that the “fabulous *American Dream*” was not going to be easy to achieve. The winter arrived. Juan recounts how hard it was for them to get accustomed to the cruel cold. “The girls did not have much, only some clothes and a couple of blankets that we used to cover ourselves from the winter”. Poverty embraced them again.

Martha’s girls were little and needed to be placed in the public school. With the cease of the winter, Martha found work. A year later, the family welcomed their daughter Nina. Juan explained the challenges they had to overcome to provide their daughters with healthcare and schooling. They needed to complete a list of requirements before the girls could attend school.

Soon Martha and I realized that the girls required health checkups, vaccines, and other things necessary so that they could get matriculated in school. It was very difficult for us because of the language, to this day we do not speak it, it has been difficult for us.

Because of that, this was even more difficult for Martha, and because at that moment, I was not able to help her navigate what was needed. I had to work so I could put food on the table. But, then she was very brave, and she started to find out how to get the vaccines for the girls, and then she got the medical card. Little by little, she was making her way through the system of Chicago.

This testimony reaffirms that Latinx families with a lack of resources in their native language might experience more difficulty in navigating, not only the education system but the healthcare system and other fundamental systems that provide the basic needs of families. Research by Moll et al. (2005) shows that Latinx parents are not very familiar with the American education system. As a result, they are inclined to help their kids based on their prior knowledge acquired in their homelands which are often different from the school expectations and the experiences the kids have in their classrooms. Along with that, Juan provides a testimony of how he and his wife helped their daughters with school chores, healthcare, and learning at home.

My wife taught the girls, I could not help much because I do not have much education, but she remembered things from her schooling. Martha used to tell the girls that math is math and it is the same in whatever kind of language, that is how she taught them math, the way she best knew.

Despite the fact that they did not speak English, or were not sure how to support their daughters, Juan said that Martha never desisted in helping the kids. “She was persistent and tried

to help them the way she was taught.” This demonstrates Juan’s and Martha’s determination to help their daughters thrive in a new education system. They assisted the children in their own way and at different degrees throughout their schooling.

When the oldest girls entered school, it was a bit complicated, we could not help them much. The sisters are almost the same age, so they helped each other with homework, and little by little, they were feeling better in school. But what really helped was that my wife and I tried, and they saw that.

Additionally, his testament provides a vivid narrative and insights to the challenges immigrant families face navigating the system of education from the start, and how this lingers until higher education.

At the moment we realized that we needed to place our girls in school and that we had Nina on the way our lives in the United States changed. We were naïve and we did not know anything about the school system, because we were new to the city and with a baby on the way. We did not know anything about hospitals, it was like starting all over again. Martha is the pillar of the family. She started to find ways to help me, she stayed at home with the girls and I went to work. For me, the most important thing was the girls’ education and then I told her to stay at home with the girls so that she could educate them. Since then the education of our children has been so important to us, but it was really hard for us to help our oldest daughters. Our oldest daughters went to high school and at that time DACA came. They were happy but they did not know if they should continue studying or should only work. We wanted them to study, but we did not know

how to help them, the thing with college was difficult, and even more, as undocumented, we did not understand many things and did not have any guidance or more information.

Their struggle continued, but they managed to get the girls through the education system year after year. Their mother's grit and desire to ease their daughters' challenges empowered her to ask questions so she could be better prepared to help Nina. Juan recounts what she did.

After all the oldest girls went through and after all we went through with them, Martha started learning a bit more about the system. Then she started getting involved in the school committee, and in programs on how to help our youngest daughter. Little did she know that she was discovering doors to open so Nina could get other academic opportunities. She learned ways to help her study, and we saw how those barriers we had encountered with our oldest were disappearing. Then, she graduated from the family program at Nina's school and she learned many things there. She got me involved, she even had our oldest daughter talk to a college counselor.

The program Juan alluded was the Academy of Parents in Leadership. His wife attended the last cohort at their youngest daughter's school.

**Nina García.** She was born and raised in Chicago. She is the youngest of three. She is a 16-year-old high school sophomore. She attends a selective enrollment high school that serves a 44% low-income population. The Latinx student body represents the largest in the school followed by White and Asian. Nina does well in her classes, and she has expressed her interest in enrolling at the university to become a pediatrician. During the interview, she shared the family struggles to support her, her reasons to pursue higher education, and her experience attending a summer college preparation program hosted at a local university.

Our interview took place on a Sunday, she is busy during the week with e-learning. At the beginning of the conversation, she seemed a bit nervous. I reassured her that the interview was going to be casual. I reminded her about my research topic and the reason for her selection for the interview. She decided to have her interview in English and Spanish (Spanglish). We proceeded to record, and she began telling me about herself and her interest in pursuing higher education.

*Me siento feliz, [ I feel happy]. Todos los struggles de mi family desde chiquita y todo lo malo que nos ha pasado sobre todo eso podemos estar juntos en familia [Despite all the struggles we had since I was a little girl we have stayed together as a family]. My dad and mom tried to help me and my sisters as much as they can, mi dad trabaja mucho para nosotras [my dad works a lot for us] and my mom is always learning things y my mom siempre está aprendiendo cosas y anda en los committes y en trayendo information for me and my sisters. [My mom is in the [school] committees and brings information for me and my sisters]. They have struggled so much in this country, but they have never given up. I must make them proud.*

She shared how happy she was and remarked on the struggles of her family since she was a little girl and remembers all they have gone through. In spite of all that, they still stay together as a family. Nina mentioned that because of all those challenges they had to face, she wants to make her family proud when she graduates from college. She will be the first in the family to achieve a higher education degree.

I want to give them the pride of being able to graduate from school. I think everyone's fought a lot to get me to that place in my life. It is for me, but for my family too because

they've supported me to get to that. I want to be a pediatrician for me it's important to help other people who need it. My family needed it very much when they came to this country. I don't want to make all the money in the world, I want to help people.

I asked Nina about the takeaways from the family program her mom attended at her former elementary school and that she was part of as well. She mentioned that her mother was more involved in the community.

My mother was part of the new PTO (parent-teacher organization) in the school and then she was going to different meetings, she always talked about the things she learned there. I was happy for my mom because she seemed very happy doing all the things she was doing, going to places and meeting people, that is what is the best that happen to her and we were happy.

We continued our conversation and explored more of her reasons to get a college degree. I asked her how she and her family are preparing for it. She tells me that she puts her efforts into getting good grades and extracurriculars and that her mom is always looking for opportunities for her to get ready for college.

My mom asked a bunch of people about programs and things for me to do in the summer, *ella me ayuda mucho*, [she helps me a lot]. So, she got information about a program at the university for kids in high school, and she told me about it. *Y yo invite a mi amigo de la escuela* [ I invited my friend from school] *y mi ma' le dijo a su ma' y aplicamos los dos para ir* [and my mom told his mom and we applied]. Then we attended classes in the summer.

She continues sharing what she learned in the summer college prep program she participated in at a local four-year university in June of 2019.

I was very nervous about it because I didn't know what to expect. When I entered my first class and saw the students, I was so happy. The experience *me abrió más los ojos* [opened my eyes more]. I took a bioethics course, this showed me what the journey is to help in the medical field to see if that's what I wanted to do. *Me gusto mucho* [I liked it], the kids in the program talked about what school is like and what school is going to be like. I have to go into that process, we know some things, but in the program, they helped me clarify many things. I felt a little weird because we were just three sophomores between juniors and seniors, but *eso fue como*, wow! [that was like wow!].”

When I asked her about what was most surprising to her during this experience, she leans in a bit more towards the screen and tells me seemingly excited that the classes were different. She elaborates on that and her overall experience.

In the college preparation program, we read and wrote. In-class discussions were encouraged and I liked them a lot. Then in the group, the discussions were interesting because of the different experiences of the people there. This was not the same as high school. In high school, you have to learn from the book. I like to learn together with others. This experience changed my perspective.

Nina's participation in the college preparation program might have provided a strong foundation for her future endeavors in higher education. This close experience of college might have fueled her extra motivation and perhaps something to look forward to. I believe that this was the pinnacle of the combined experiences, resources, and learning her family, particularly

her mother has gathered throughout the years. I am positive that Nina will get through higher education and become the pediatrician she wants to be.

The interviews with the Garcia's provided this research with important information. Without a doubt, their narratives were rich in personal experiences and memories of their lives in the US. The subjects of their conversations revolved around struggles maneuvering healthcare and education systems, values, and the results of their efforts that are now reflected in the education of their daughters and grandchildren. The Garcia's also provided a glimpse into their family interactions and community engagement.

***The Martinez: La Unión Hace La Fuerza (Unity Makes Us Stronger)***

The end of the day brings some peace and quiet to the Martinez's home. They live in the heart of a vibrant, predominately Latinx neighborhood in the lower southwest of the city. Because of its iconic buildings and breathtaking street, many developers have been permeating the neighborhood swiftly gentrifying it. But many families, like the Martinez, have stood strong against gentrification. They continue their lives and embrace their culture even more as if this were a shield that would protect them from the white beast. The neighborhood welcomed the Martinez family 20 years ago. Their kids played on their street, attended the neighborhood schools, and in some ways, they still felt like they never left their home back in Mexico. This spring marks another anniversary since the young Martinez children and their mother stepped foot across the border and traveled by bus to downtown Chicago. Their father waiting eagerly to reunite with his family after three long years without them.

In their modest apartment, when the sun goes down, the Martinezes welcome the time to recoup and connect with each other. They are all busy working and studying. The evenings are

times when they can relax and prepare for the next day. Their living room lights up with conversations. At the same time, the latest episode of the telenovela plays on TV. As the night advances, Laura prepares her lunch. Dad goes to bed, and mom waits for José. He arrives home late; tonight, and every night, the restaurant captures him until past midnight.

The Martinezes older children hold steady jobs. José and Laura are financially independent and help their parents with some income for the home. The mother's and father's annual income is approximately \$20,000. Their earnings place them under the US Federal poverty guideline.

**Rosa Martinez.** Rosa is 48 years old. She arrived in the United States in 2000. She was born in the State of Chiapas from the town of Ocosingo, an indigenous Tzotzil community. Her family moved to Guanajuato, located in the Bajío region about 220 miles from Mexico City. They were in search of better opportunities and safety. In the early 1990s, the turmoil caused by the guerrilla forced many people to flee the region. Then, the family was forced to migrate to a small agricultural village in Guanajuato, Mexico where Rosa spent much of her young days running and playing around the cornfields. There, she met her husband Manuel. She is married and has two children, ages 27 and 25.

I met Rosa in 2013. She was part of a group of parents that regularly met at the neighborhood community organization. At that time, they were concerned about what was happening in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and wanted to understand the decision of closing schools. This action eventually led to an increase in Charter Schools, which are independently run and receive public funding. Rosa was one of the mothers whose children were affected by school closures.

I explained my research and invited her to participate in the interview along with her children who are now university graduates. She agreed to volunteer her time and share her story with me. I met with her on a Wednesday evening and after she came back from church. We began our conversation with stories about her background. Rosa was born in Chiapas in a small town called Ocosingo. Her hometown came to the national attention in 1994 when the Zapatista Movement led by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) saw its uprising when President Carlos Salinas de Gortari revoked the agrarian reform in 1992 in preparations for the North American Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the hopes of the farmers to gain title to their lands vanished (Rus, Hernandez, & Mattiace, 2001). She shares some fading memories about the movement and the motivation of people to fight for their rights and their land.

The government wanted to take away our land and our rights. I remember people gathering in large groups and having conversations, I did not understand much, but we knew that we had to move to another place that there was going to be trouble. My father kept us safe and then we moved to Mexico City and then we came to Guanajuato.

She completed her elementary school in the town and learned much from her mother and the people in the community. She ran free with the children in the neighborhood and played with them for many hours. She remembers a special occasion celebrated in her town and her face lights up, seemingly happy.

When I was a child there were many things for us kids to do, we helped our mothers and played with friends, we went to church. I especially enjoyed the Día de la Candelaria Festival because there was much to see and to do. The town had a kermess on the main street and people gathered in the square. There were fireworks and the band played there.

People dance around and the image of Our Lady went in procession, people followed it praying the rosary and dancing around with their masks.

Her memory of the festival brings memories back to me as well. I nostalgically remember the colorful church festivities in January, when my neighborhood celebrated the *Santo Patrono* –the Patron Saint. The vivid narrative she presents in her story connects to not only culture but religion and beliefs. I find this event noteworthy because this provides an opportunity to make connections between beliefs and the way parents educate their children. This brings me back to the concept of *familismo* and the role of values among Latinx families. I want to underline the indigenous knowledge she possesses. I think that religious values, beliefs, and indigenous ways of life are worth exploring when it comes to working with immigrant families.

The conversation moves along to the time she arrived in Chicago with her two children after a long bus ride from the Texas border. Her husband was already in Chicago, had a job and a place for them to stay. Shortly after she came she knew that it was time to matriculate the children in school. She recounts the obstacles she encountered along the way as she enrolled her children in school.

It was a difficult time for Laura and José, they were very young. At first, they were very happy because they needed their father, they missed him very much. But we were reunited, and I needed to get the children's priorities. They needed to go to school. I asked the neighbors about the school for José. He was 7 years old when we arrived, Laura was still little but if she could attend school that was good for us because I could find a job and work some hours. Placing the children in school was complicated for me because I did not understand many things, the kids needed to get to the doctor, and I did not know

how to pay for that or how would I pay for that. I did not understand English and I did not get things right. I needed help from a person who spoke Spanish, I felt bad for not understanding or for looking like a fool in front of people. It was very hard for me. For the kids, it was difficult too, but they adjusted to the language with time.

Once her children got enrolled in school and started attending classes, their needs for additional support became apparent. Rosa remembered her frustration in trying to help them with their homework, her limited resources, and her aspiration for quality education for her children.

I got frustrated many times because I couldn't help them with their homework or things from school. I do not have much schooling myself, much of what I know I learned from my mother or my aunts. Getting an education in Mexico was difficult then, but when we came to the United States I wanted my children to get a good education so that they could be educated and avoid being taken advantage of.

Rosa and her family slowly adjusted to life in Chicago. After some time, things started to work out for them. The children were in school, Manuel had a steady job and Rosa took care of the children. She sometimes found work cleaning homes. The schedule was flexible, and she could tend to her children and bring extra money for the family. She talked to people in the neighborhood and was referred to the neighborhood community organization. She mentioned that the small non-for-profit was instrumental in her adjustment to the community and the school.

At the organization, they were always helpful. The people there were very welcoming.

They had many programs and supported people with food, clothes, and other things like

that. They were very helpful to my children, some young people came to help the children with school, and they invited the mothers to meetings.

She was comfortable coming to the community organization because she had established good relationships there. Whenever she needed assistance this small community organization helped her. They provided services and were useful in answering questions she had regarding school. She enrolled her children in tutoring and after school programs there. Then 2013 came and she joined other families who tried to understand why their schools were on probation and on a list of schools recommended to be closed.

when CPS [Chicago Public Schools] announced that our school was on probation the parents there were nervous because we did not know what would happen to our school and we did not want our children to go to schools far from home. We spoke to [the community organization] and then they invited people from the university to speak with us. A professor from the university talked with us and we started meeting more regularly and then we started to participate in the parent program.

She said that it was the first time that she participated in a parent program. She also shared how she felt about formally partaking in an educational endeavor.

The meetings we had with the people from the university and the people from the community organization gave me confidence. At that time I was afraid to get into school stuff that was for me. I was not confident that I could do it because I did not have enough schooling in Mexico, so I hesitated at first when they invited me to participate in the classes. I thought I did not have anything to say, and I was afraid the other moms were not going to take me seriously, but I was wrong.

Research by De la Vega (2007), Moll et al. (2005), and Rodriguez-Brown (2010) emphasize that programs relevant to Latino families include trust (*confianza*) as an essential component of the work. *Confianza* was central to the motivation and self-efficacy that Rosa experienced.

As our conversation moved along, I encouraged Rosa to tell me more about her participation in the program, and anything she wanted to share her experience before and after the program.

I learned a lot in the program; things like community organizing, some writing, how to help my children with homework, and what kids need to learn in school. But I was very motivated to contribute to conversations on the problems that the neighborhood had and how to solve those problems. I felt reassured by the other mothers and the people who came to speak to us. I was happy with myself because I was taking classes with professors from the university. I never thought that I would do that. That was something I appreciated so much. And I also remember the first time we visited the university in downtown. That was something I will never forget. That moment is so important to me because my José and Laura graduated from that university I went to visit with the parent program.

Her testimony provides valuable information on self-confidence and motivation. The role, the space, and the circumstances in which she came into this educational opportunity provide additional information on her engagement. The community organization provided a safe space for Rosa and the other families and acknowledged their concerns. It invited other stakeholders, in this case, the university to work along with them and the parents in finding ways

to offer information that resulted in further educational opportunities for the group. After the program, Rosa enrolled in English as a second language classes and continued participating in community events.

**José Martínez.** He is a 27-year-old young man. He is the oldest. He was born in Guanajuato, Mexico. He arrived in Chicago with his younger sister, Laura, and his mother, Rosa, in 2000. He graduated from a four-year university in Chicago. José received a substantial fellowship that supplied financial assistance for his studies as he was non-FAFSA eligible. He and his sister Laura are DACAmented. Currently, there are 700,000 DACA recipients, they are protected under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). This program was instituted under the Obama administration and granted temporary work permits and protection from deportation; however, DACA students are not eligible for financial aid (FAFSA). Despite the additional financial expenses, he graduated with a degree in business administration in 2015. He is the first in his family to attain a higher education degree. He currently works as a manager in the restaurant industry. He plans to open his own business in the future.

I invited José to contribute his voice to this research. In my previous conversations with him, I explained the study and the guidelines for participation. He agreed to the interview. It started with his arrival in the United States. José shared his memories of the moment he and his family arrived in Chicago to reunite with his father. “I was longing to see my dad; he came to the US before us. When we arrived at the bus station in Chicago, he was there waiting for us, that was a good moment”. The reunification of families plays a significant role in immigration, but “family reunification is characterized by barriers and limited options for immigrant families.” (Boehm, 2017, p. 408). According to the Pew Research Center several laws from 1996, 2002, and 2006 emphasized border control, prioritized enforcement of laws on hiring immigrants, and

tightened admissions eligibility. As a result, it has become harder for individuals to reunite with their families. Many families have been forced to live apart and on both sides of the US border.

At that point, José thought that the most difficult part of the journey had passed. However, the family journey did not end at the bus station. It only marked the beginning of another one; the Martinezes life in a new country, with a new language, and new ways. One of those new ways was education.

When we first arrived, my mother did not put us in school right away, I think she did not know how. She took care of us at the beginning. Then she took us to school. Honestly, I was very confused, everything was different. The school building and the furniture there was different.

He adds that the support his mother and father could give him was not much, but they always remarked, to him and his sister, the importance of respecting their teachers and doing their homework. This was a way to show respect.

My parents always told us to respect our teachers and the people in the school building. They said that respect is the highest of values, that even though we were poor, we could never forget that respect, hard work, humbleness, and gratitude would take us places.

Respect continues to be regarded in the Martinezes home. I asked him whether those values had anything to do with his reasons to attain a university degree. “They do” he responds as his voice breaks. José tells me that going to the university was a way to acknowledge his parents' sacrifices and struggles. He mentioned that despite his parent's low education they always told him and his sisters about the importance of education. He mentioned that his parents

risked everything and left their family behind because they wanted the best for him and his sisters.

Going to college was no question for me, I wanted to honor my parents' sacrifices and give them the satisfaction to have a son with a college education. They did not have much opportunity to attain more education in Mexico, but they know education was important and a way for us to a better life. I felt the responsibility to do well in school and get to college so I could help my parents financially and achieve our dream to own a family business.

However, the pathway to college was not a straight one. José mentioned that he tried to figure out college and waited a year to enroll. This was because one of his high school teachers told him about a fellowship that could help him with financial assistance so that he could attend a university. Welton and Martinez (2014) argue that “high schools bear a considerable amount of the responsibility to ensure students receive the necessary supports and complete the necessary tasks to be able to access” (p. 198). However, they point out that students from marginalized communities “are not privy to the information or unwritten rules of high school that would connect them to important college preparatory resources” (p. 199).

In particular, Latinx students are underrepresented in college enrollment and graduation from a bachelor’s degree due to reasons of access to financial resources, enrollment in AP courses, and overall college preparatory information. Adejé and Martinez (2014) conducted qualitative research that focused on the college choice and opportunity networks of Latinx students in South Texas. In their studies, they found that “college information and knowledge was primarily tailored to the norms of white, affluent students and their parents, immigrant

students and their parents faced challenges accessing college information” (p. 204). José shared his confusion after high school.

My parents and I struggled to navigate the American system of education. To be honest I was lost once graduating high school. The process to enter the university was confusing for me and for my parents. I lost a year trying to find ways to be in a good university.

Latinx students experience challenges they need to confront before, during, and after higher education. In my experience, I have witnessed the struggles of Latinx students when it comes to a sense of belonging, remediation courses, and racial microaggressions, just to name a few. José recounts the challenges he faced as a first-generation college student related to remediation courses.

I had to take additional courses because my placement test was not at the percentage it needed to be. I took remedial classes for English, you know, being a second language learner has been hard even though I always try to be better at the language. Being an ESL does not mean that I do not have smart things to say, or that I am less capable of doing good work. Instead of remedial courses, universities and colleges should stop labeling people who speak a language other than English and provide them with a community of people that support them in their language endeavors. Additional courses represent another financial challenge, especially for students like me, who can't take out loans from the government. I needed to pay for those extra courses out of pocket, only to prove that I was capable to handle the academic work.

His experience underlines the need for earlier supports in preparation for college. There is a disparity in college preparation courses among Latinx, Anjalé and Martinez (2014) describe

this as the *College Readiness Debt*. This term is related to a lack of understanding Latinx students have about the requirements to enroll in advance courses and the inequalities represented in school policies and procedures that increased college-related opportunities for only certain students. This issue should be addressed early in the education pathway so that students are better prepared for college. Family programs can serve as a platform to disseminate information on college aspirations and preparation.

In contrast, and to end our conversation, José tells me that his parents were his inspiration to thrive in his higher education studies. “My parents’ hard work and dedication showed my sister and I the way we should approach our work. I couldn’t do less than they were doing. I had to succeed because I had no other option or desire.” José recognizes his parents' hard work as well as how despite their levels of education, they taught him life lessons that continue to be the most valuable lessons he received.

My father and my mother did not have the opportunity to continue their education in Mexico, they only completed basic education but that did not prevent them to teach us what they knew. They gave me their *consejos*, and their life lessons and those are the most valuable to me.

He explained how his parents expressed the importance of education. College was not an option for him, it was a responsibility, something he had to do to honor his parents. His parents *consejos* guided him in the journey.

The importance of including cultural and familial capital into the development of programs that support families of Latinx is critical. Anjalé and Martinez observe that *consejos* (narrative storytelling/words of wisdom) are a way of transmitting cultural capital between

Latinx parents and students. In my opinion, the acknowledgment and integration of these cultural elements are crucial for the support of Latinx students aspiring to higher education. Lopez and Vazquez (2006) suggest that *consejos* or a traditional way is a form of family engagement underestimated in school settings.

**Laura Martinez.** She is the second oldest child of three. She was born in Mexico and brought to the United States at the age of five. She is now 25 years old. She completed her degree in business administration from a four-year institution in 2017. She plans to continue her education in the near future. She is exploring possibilities for a master's degree in accounting. She currently works as a financial advisor at a family-operated accounting firm.

Our conversation starts with memories of her arrival in her Chicago neighborhood. She remembers, “when we arrived in Chicago, it was like a Mexico Hispanic populated neighborhood. It made it an easier transition for us.” She mentions the familiarity of her new neighborhood, this made her adjustment a little simpler. Her predominantly Latin American community, Mexican, for the most part, provided her with some kind of ease when navigating the new culture and ways of doing. Nevertheless, she recalls that some other ways did not align with what she valued,

The culture was strange. In Mexico, parents teach you that you should be respectful to your elders and to your peers. When I started school here it was really different. There were rules but were not followed through. It was shocking for me to see that other kids were not very respectful. I did not like people referring to me as dude because I thought it was a very disrespectful word. I did not find it cool like the other kids. In my household,

those things were not acceptable. I did not find it cool like the other kids. In my household, those things were not acceptable.

Her words referred to the importance that values have in Latinx families. Value systems hold a strong position among Mexican families and are part of the education of children, the concept of being “*bien educado*” encompasses the sense of respect, politeness, and gives a sense of pride. This has been discussed by the families interviewed for this research. Besides this concept of culture and values in education, Laura told me about her struggles in the language as part of that adaptation to the culture and how she and her brother created ways to quickly adjust to their new reality.

I remember that my English was definitely a work in progress. When I was in class I tried, but sometimes my teacher would forget that I was there. My brother and I had created this activity. We would try to talk to each other in English. We would teach each other how to pronounce words correctly, or as good as we possibly could to adapt to this culture and language.

There is an important element in Laura’s testimony that I must point out. She mentioned her teacher and her reaction to her, almost giving the impression of her invisibility in the classroom. This comment shocked me because recently arrived children and youth continue to feel invisible in the classroom. Research by Wassell, Fernandez, and LaVan (2010) found that poor instructional practices, a lack of empathy for students’ experiences, and diminished access to the curriculum affect the experiences of second language students in the classroom. This issue is of great importance, and it should be addressed in teacher preparation programs and by the school administration. I consider that the involvement of parents by the school is crucial in the

amelioration of the disturbing reality of immigrant children. Schools should provide culturally relevant parent involvement opportunities so that immigrant parents become visible.

Her experience led us to the question about her parents' support in her education journey. Despite the limitations her parents had in accessing school information, she shared that her mother was involved with the community organization from the neighborhood because they offered homework support. She told me that her mother took her and her brother there after school, "we used to go there for an hour or so. I remember being here almost all the time after school, we had homework help and other programs. I was in the art program there". Laura recalls that this was not the only instance where her mother found ways to provide her and her brother with resources.

My mother always found out activities for us. When I was in high school, we came along to a college fair that the community organization hosted, there I was able to explore different options and ask questions. It was motivating for me to have my mother come with me because that way I could show her that I recognized all she had done for me.

After a few college fairs, Laura was ready to continue her education. Finances were a decisive factor in her decision. She applied to be considered for a fellowship. The fellowship gave her a good start but did not cover all her academic and transportation expenses. I asked her about her challenges at the university.

I remember everyone always told me that college would be the best four years of my life. They sure were great, but I don't think I was prepared to face the struggles and barriers I had to overcome. Those four years of college made me wish I had a magic wand that could somehow make things different for other students.

She elaborated more about those challenges. First, she mentioned the issues of financial aid as she was ineligible for student loans. Second, she pointed out the lack of support from her counselor. She said, “I often felt like I didn’t have support especially from my counselor. Even though she was a black woman, I often didn’t feel seen by her”. And finally, she identified the lack of Latinx role models in academia. She said that “it would’ve been great to have at least one Latinx professor.”

In addition to pointing out the barriers, I asked her about the primary reasons for her decision to attend college she mentioned that honoring her parents’ efforts was so important for her, and her way to honor them was obtaining her bachelor’s degree. Huerta and Brittan (2010) mention that “Mexican children feel indebted to their parents for all the sacrifices they had made to make it possible for them to be in an American school” (p. 393). They recognize their parents’ immigrant journey and their family’s stories of struggle back in Mexico. These stories become a motivation to them and often allude to the need to do well and take advantage of the opportunities they have.

Along with that, Laura shares that she wanted to be financially solvent. This way, she could help her parents. She wanted to provide them with financial stability and relief. She answered that “with a college degree, I knew I would have more possibilities to get a good job and economic stability.”

Finally, she points out to the value-added that a college degree has for her, “I want to use my skills, resources, and my network to have a great impact in communities. I want families and youth to be financially literate.” Laura wants to share her knowledge with other families like

hers. For Laura, a college degree does not solely mean monetary rewards, but her recompense is to share what she knows with others.

The Martinezes poignant stories allude to their adjustment to a new life far away from their homeland. They share their efforts to learn the language and be seen. Mrs. Martinez shares a story of colorful folklore and aspirations. Laura and José walk us through their educational experiences as new immigrants in elementary school and as first-generation college students in higher education.

### **The Hernandezes, The Garcia's, And The Martinezes: Our Hope for The Latinx Community**

In this section, the Hernandezes, the Garcias, and the Martinezes shared their hopes for the Latinx community. Their hopes capture their sentiments and wishes for the future of Latinos in the United States.

I believe that sharing hopes cultivates a space for a stronger human connection. Sharing hopes connects us in authentic ways and gives us the chance to explore endless possibilities. As I was listening to these families' hopes, my grandmother's wisdom was ever-present. On hope, she said, *al mal tiempo, buena cara*, which means put on a brave face and weather the storm. In these times, the Latinx community is "putting a brave face in front of the storm", heavy rain is pouring upon us, and at times threatened to drown us all. At the moment, the Latinx community is trying to survive a health pandemic and a government that oppresses minorities with adverse policies and vicious rhetoric.

I wish these families' hopes for the Latinx community engulf my readers with *esperanza*.

**Lupe Hernandez**

I wish that we awaken that sleeping consciousness, we parents, so that we parents can give our children other opportunities. We come to this country to work, to give them a better life, but a better life where you do not repeat that we are not worthy of a good education. I wish that we as Hispanic, Latino community, any minority are listened to with respect and that our needs are not put aside, our needs are also human. We have the same desires as the Americans here, our wishes for our children must be heard. We need people like you who care about Hispanic communities, about the situations of schools, and that helps provide healthy environments for the healthy development of kids in all aspects. I desire our communities are heard, that we are listened to and that our experiences are acknowledged and not set aside.

**Andrea Hernandez**

The way we are looked at has to change and to do that as first-generation sons and daughters we need to complete high school, associates, bachelors, masters, and doctorates. I hope to see more Latino graduates. Our voices are gonna become louder, but we should start now. I hope that in the future its equality for everyone. We should all be treated equally and be seen equally, and those are my hopes.

**Martha Garcia**

I hope for more equality, equity, education, access to health for the Latino community. I hope for more investment in education and greater equity. For example, as a mother, I would have liked for my neighborhood school to have sufficient funds for programs that other schools have. It was the case in my school, we did not have much. I had to find other resources for my kids outside of the school. Without a doubt what we need, and what I hope is a better education,

neighborhoods with better schools, parks, and places where children are healthier. I hope for much safer neighborhoods. If we want our neighborhoods to have lower crime rates and better livelihoods we have to invest in education. Latinos need the tools to advocate and create greater awareness about their rights, access to health, and education. My hope is certainly equity which is what my community needs.

### **Juan Garcia**

My hopes for the Latino community are that people realize that we are good people. The image that has been painted about who Latinos are in this country is not what we are. We come to this country with the hope to give our families a better chance and a better life. I do not want my daughters to be perceived as criminals, lazy, or snatchers of jobs.

My hopes for the Latino community are that we will be taken into consideration on all areas of life. I am hopeful that, in a not too distant time, we will no longer be stigmatized, that we receive the salaries our labor deserves, that we are allowed to attend university education at low cost, that we will have medical access according to our wages, and that the level of education we receive is of quality and is equitable. That our community recognizes that it has great power. We live in fear, and because of that, we are not acknowledged. We are a very hard-working community so I believe that if we were treated with dignity and respect our potential could be seen immediately. My hope is that if we continue to work together to advance.

### **Nina Garcia**

My hope for the Latinx community is we receive the resources we need. That all Latinx kids have access to education and healthcare. I hope that youth have the opportunity to pursue their dreams and do what they desire to do in life.

**Rosa Martinez**

My hopes for the Latino community are that people know the value of our community. We are good people that come here seeking better opportunities for our children. We are hardworking people; we have values and show respect to others. I hope that community organizations and schools get proper funding to continue to help us with resources and programs that support parents learning and adjustment to life in the United States. There is a lot of injustice that is perpetrated in communities like ours, and I wish that to stop.

**José Martinez**

I hope that the Latinx community can progress by making efforts to talk with people from different nationalities within the Latinx community, but also with those from other racial and ethnic groups. This is so People of Color can build stronger coalitions and support one another throughout times of crisis. We must acknowledge that both commonalities and differences exist among the Latinx community. This is why it is important to make an effort to learn from one another. I also hope more people in the Latinx community are able to mobilize. To me, anyone that is looking out for family members working or continuing their education, or doing both things, is working on themselves. Education is not the only pathway to success, which is why we should never dismiss the work anyone contributes to society. Nevertheless, like any group, I hope the Latinx community is able to work in positions where they can grow, be respected, feel fulfilled. Lastly, I hope that there's major progress in U.S. immigration policy, by having the U.S. acknowledge its undocumented citizens as citizens—human beings! people with legal protections. The U.S goes against its own democratic principles when it holds two different standards—allowing for deportations, immigrant detention, family separation, and refugees to

now have to seek asylum in neighboring countries first under Trump's "Remain in Mexico" policy that began in the summer of 2019. Recent arriving immigrants need to now demonstrate to ICE officials that their lives are in danger if they stay in Mexico to be admitted into the U.S. This undermines the U. S's democratic principles.

### **Laura Martinez**

The Latinx community is resilient but I wish things were different for us. A hope that I have for my community is for us to have better access to resources and education. We and our parents shouldn't have to worry about working two or even three jobs to provide for our families or to pay for college. In an ideal world, we wouldn't have to worry about choosing finances over our education, our right to education.

### **Summary of Chapter Four**

This chapter presented the narratives of the individuals and the families interviewed. I captured the narratives of each individual and coupled them with research and my own experiences. Additionally, I created profiles for each individual with information about their family role homeland, nationality, years living in the US, age, marital status, level of education, first language, English proficiency, occupation, financial role, and annual income. This to provide the reader with some context about the individualities of each of the participants.

Furthermore, the chapter includes a section expressing the families' hopes for the Latinx community. Each member of the family shared their vision for the future of Latinx in the US. In particular, their hopes offer the opportunity to continue my research in the future. As a researcher, not only do I hope that this study serves as an instrument for advocacy for programs that honor and support the intergenerational funds of knowledge, learning, and experiences of

Latino families living in the U.S., but I also hope that families strengthen their lifelong learning experience and feel empowered to continue learning. Their vision for the future is worth advocating for.

In the final chapter, I present the interpretation and analysis of the data. I include a comparison and contrast of the results based on research from the literature review and present the findings of the study. Moreover, I introduce implications for practice, explain the limitations of the study, and make recommendations for future research. In the end, I offer a reflection and the conclusion of the research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Interpretation of Data and Conclusion

#### **Emplumada**

When summer ended  
the leaves of snapdragons withered  
taking their shrill-colored mouths with them.  
They were still, so quiet. They were  
violet where umber now is. She hated  
and she hated to see  
them go. Flowers

born when the weather was good - this  
she thinks of, watching the branch of peaches  
daring their ways above the fence, and further,  
two hummingbirds, hovering, stuck to each other,  
arcing their bodies in grim determination  
to find what is good, what is  
given them to find. These are warriors

distancing themselves from history.  
They find peace  
in the way they contain the wind  
and are gone.

Lorna Dee Cervantes

The poem *Emplumada* by Lorna Dee Cervantes presents the immigrant journey to me. It gives a sense of nostalgia and ignites the soul with a sense of strength. The palpable image painted in the poem represents the sadness of leaving, the dangers of crossing, and the resilience of immigrants. It illustrates their determination and their strength in the adaptation to another country. The beauty of this poem and the way it captures the feelings of the immigrant story makes me remember my own journey and reflect on the narratives of the families I interviewed.

The poem also leaves a sense of containment. That is the feeling some of us experience right now, a lingering feeling of despair. Others have found ways to “find peace in the way they contain the wind”; they have taken flight and are gone, like one of the mothers I interviewed. She

shared a lesson from her mentor with me. This was the ultimate lesson to her: “spread your wings and expand your world.” She is one of those who have taken flight.

My purpose for this research was to learn what Latinx immigrant families have done to break the sense of containment and break free embracing “the wind and be gone.” By this, I mean, the ways immigrant families navigate the American system of education. Education is very important for the Latinx community; traditionally, our ancestors have shared their knowledge with us and have strengthened the idea that education is the way to a better livelihood. For instance, my mother said that education would give me options for a better life and would make me somebody. My grandmother told me that education would free me from the rage of men.

In chapter one, I discussed intergenerational family programs as options to support Latinx families in the maneuvering of the education system so that their children can graduate with a higher education degree. Even though Latinx college enrollment is increasing, it is still not enough. I pointed out the urgency of policies that advocate for families of color and that financially support intergenerational family programs in the schools. Furthermore, I mentioned that intergenerational family programs that included college readiness as part of their curriculum could possibly support the navigation of higher education among first-generation, immigrant, Latino families. As a result, there may possibly be higher rates of college degrees among Latinx who wished to pursue higher education.

I considered the attainment of a higher education degree for this study because of the importance it has for me. However, it is not my intention to suggest that higher education is the ultimate goal for all families. I recognize other forms of formal education, such as continuing education diplomas, certifications, and community college degrees. In this research, I focus on

what we can learn from Latinx immigrant families who participated in intergenerational learning programs about navigating the American education system for their children's attainment of higher education. These lessons emerged from the narratives. Their stories also sparked new thoughts and epiphanies.

As I stated in chapter one, the education continuum is confusing for vulnerable families and disoriented newcomers, who like me, embrace and see this country as their new home, a new beginning, and a start to a better future. This is the premise of my research: learning from the stories of Latinx immigrant families and their journeys through higher education with the guidance of intergenerational family learning programs. These programs might be of assistance in the successful navigation of the U.S. higher education system. The participation of Latino parents in intergenerational learning programs might represent an increase in college attainment among Latinxs. With that in mind, I present the findings of my research in this chapter.

### **Interpretation and Data Analysis**

The interpretation and analysis of data help comprehend the results of the research. Efron and Ravid (2020) remind us of the purpose of the interpretation, which is to bring together the data in a cohesive manner so that it is meaningful and makes sense. They also identify the role of the researcher in this phase. Here, the researcher begins the data analysis and identifies the emerging preliminary findings. The researcher revises and refines the investigation throughout the data collection process.

To begin the process of interpretation, I summarized the stories of low-income, immigrant Latino families and first-generation college graduates and the codes used to identify emerging themes. Then, I centered the research question and the learning unveiled from Latinx families' experiences as participants in an intergenerational learning program and how this

participation informed the navigation of the American education system for their children's higher education. Finally, I indicated the major themes that emerged from the narratives.

I interviewed three families and eight family members. These families have children considering college, currently in college, and graduates. They shared their stories and backgrounds.

The Hernandez household has been active in the school and in the community since their oldest child started middle school. Mrs. Hernandez has participated in some parent engagement programs since then. She shared an event she holds dear, which is a recognition from the Mayor of the City of Chicago due to her involvement and leadership in the school parent patrol. She mentioned her experiences in the intergenerational family program. She said that this opportunity provided her with important information for college. At the time she participated in the program, her daughter was in her last year of high school. Mrs. Hernandez and her daughter did not have enough information on her next steps. Now, Andrea attends a local university. She acknowledged her mother's involvement and support throughout her academic journey. She noted that her way to make her parents proud and recognize her efforts is by graduating from the university.

The Garcia's feel stronger about supporting their youngest daughter on her college journey. They support their daughter's interests. In particular, Mrs. Garcia actively seeks information on college preparation and passes it on to Nina. She told me that after she participated in the intergenerational learning program, she felt more motivated to share what she knew with other parents.

The Martinezes are proud to have two university graduates. Their son and their daughter graduated from a local university and both hold bachelor's degrees in business administration.

They commented that higher education was the way for them to show their parents that their sacrifices have not been in vain. They conveyed their gratitude in the form of a college degree. José and Laura, the Martinezes children, migrated to the United States when they were little. They talked about the multiple times they felt invisible and shared their efforts to adjust to life in a new country as children. Later, at the university, they also needed to adjust. College life was new for them and their family. Mrs. Martinez came across the intergenerational family program because she was concerned about school closings in 2013. The program helped her with the understanding of community organizing and knowing her rights. She shared her delight when the group wrote a collective letter to their elected official advocating for a stop sign in a dangerous intersection the children had to pass to get to school. Since then, she has been participating in activities and gatherings in her neighborhood and community organization.

### ***Common Themes***

Synthesizing and interpreting the stories of these families and relating them one to the other brought me to the initial analysis of the research question. It centered on the narratives of these families and intended to find the elements that supported their navigation of the American education system, leading them toward a better understanding of higher education. Some members of these families provided a compelling narrative and interwove the memories of their homeland and the memories in their new land. Some chronicled their experiences going through the education system. Others shared their struggles, nurtured their parents' life lessons, and commented on the current events.

Correspondingly, I identified two sets of codes. On the one hand, I selected theory-generated codes. These predetermined codes were identified in the review of the literature. The anticipated codes provided an idea of the initial concepts that could emerge from the analysis of

the interviews. The theory-generated codes were: a) intergenerational learning; b) lifelong learning; c) funds of knowledge; d) challenges in higher education; e) hopes. On the other hand, I determined several in-vivo codes. These codes aligned with the theory-generated ones. The in-vivo codes emerged as the data collection went on. These derived from the families and individual narratives, and resulted in the following themes: a) mutual learning; b) learning at the formal and informal levels; c) language, bilingualism, border stories, immigrant stories, prior knowledge, culture; d) access, funding, knowledge, belonging; e) sentiments, hopes. As a whole, the theory-generated codes and the in-vivo codes indicated the relationships among the themes and provided a guide to the examination of the data.

**Intergenerational learning.** Intergenerational learning was presented as prior knowledge, life knowledge, and ancestral knowledge. The participants portrayed intergenerational learning as the memories of grandparents and the families' narratives approached intergenerational learning as multidirectional. Intergenerational learning is not only bidirectional. For instance, in their eyes, learning does not only occur between mothers and children. Multiple interactions are happening besides that between mother-child. To illustrate, they talked about interactions between mothers and fathers, siblings and siblings, child and mother, child and father, child and caregiver, caregiver and child, grandmothers and daughters, grandparents and grandchildren, ancestors to parents, and ancestors to children, and so on. These interactions are not exclusively bilateral; they are multilateral. Therefore, the way intergenerational learning was demonstrated in the narratives of these families highlighted relationships and interactions with people from different generations. The learning not only came from the people who are still present, but it extended to families' ancestors. Families talked about intergenerational learning in their narratives in forms of connections to ancestors,

behaviors, values, and cultural learnings. Intergenerational learning offered an anchor to ancestral knowledge and served as a channel to new learning among families. Finally, intergenerational learning was conveyed as learning shaped by the modeling of parents. They were actions and behaviors that parents showed such as hard-work, inspiration, and determination.

**School and community engagement.** Children pointed out the engagement of parents in school and the community. They concluded that the support of their parents in their schooling helped them thrive. Parents referred to the activities or engagement in the school or communities. For instance, they commented on activities they participated in or gave examples of memorable moments in recognition of their community engagement.

For instance, the young participants shared that they remembered the ways their parents participated in school activities or were present in parent-teacher conferences. Some pointed out to their mothers' volunteer work in community organizations. Others mentioned their parents' participation in activities in their universities in spite of their English language barrier. They highlighted the importance of including parents in schools and universities hosting events and providing information in their language as a way to promote school and community engagement.

Moreover, the participation of parents in schools and the community provided students with motivation and a sense of confidence. For parents, school and community engagement provided other opportunities for their children, and for them, it provided a sense of empowerment. For Andrea Hernández, for example, her parents' engagement in other activities gave her the confidence to be better academically and as a result, receive scholarships. She mentioned that her younger sister received a scholarship as well. She is attending a private middle school. Her mother mentioned how proud she is of her daughters, she said that the family

did not have the financial resources to send their youngest daughter to a private school and her oldest daughter to college. However, due to the recognition of their family's community engagement, their daughters were supported with scholarships for their studies.

Likewise, Nina Garcia mentioned that her mother's engagement in the community inspires her and shows her the importance of attaining a degree so that she can help her community. Nina said that she does not care much about how much money she will make as a pediatric doctor; what she wants is to help her community with access to healthcare. Her mother mentioned that she became more involved in the school's council as a way to get more resources for her daughter. As a result of her participation in the school's council, she was invited to participate in a group in a community organization where she shares resources and her knowledge of education. She stated that she felt empowered in doing so. And finally, Laura and José Martinez shared that their mother's courage to find ways to support them in their education was an inspiration and provided them with the strength to complete their degrees. Their mother continues to be engaged in their local community organization and participates in the community garden. Their mother's courage and hard work give them the motivation to move further in their careers.

**Obstacles navigating the education system.** In the eyes of the families, the obstacles they encountered in the navigation of the education system were limited information, low English language proficiency, and the lack of understanding of requirements to access basic education as new immigrants.

The youth among the participants referred to restricted financial aid as an obstacle, the confusion about college selection and access, and the English language. In particular, for immigrant, undocumented and DACAmented youth, the narrow options for financial assistance

were of great concern when selecting a university. Their options to fund some of their education were through fellowships, scholarships, private loans with excessive interest, and employment.

**Values.** The families commented on the value of respect, spirituality, hard-work, and humbleness.

Respect was the value that predominated in the conversations I had with the families and members. Parents expressed the value of education and what it meant to them. For parents, respect guided their everyday actions and interactions with others. In addition, they discussed that respect was fundamental to healthy family relationships. For example, they mentioned that respecting their work, studies, and showing respect for all people was very important to them. It upholds them to high standards that are reflected in the way they approached their daily activities and interactions.

Spirituality was presented in ways that illustrated religious traditions, faith, and beliefs. Particularly, the mothers referred to their faith in difficult moments in their lives. Their spirituality was present in the conversations not only referring to the hard times but also praising times of joy. Mothers expressed their needs and gratitude through their faith. They mentioned that held on to their spirituality for strength and resilience. During our conversations, they praised God for the good that happened to their families, their health, wellbeing, and their survival in a different country. Their spirituality is connected to family and community.

Hard work seemed to be inherent to the conversations with all the families. The participants mentioned hard-work to be very valuable to them. Families expressed the value of hard work as something their ancestors have taught them. Hard work symbolized honor and respect to them, their families, and their communities. For the parents, hard work represented

honorability and ethics. For the young participants, it meant honoring the struggles of their parents and a way to challenge themselves and step away from mediocrity.

Humbleness was recognized as a value connected to service. Particularly, for Mexicans being humble encompasses care and the willingness to serve others. Acts of humbleness in the workplace and with the community represent the good nature of the person. I resonated with this value because I was taught that caring for others humbly is an act of love.

Overall, the participants' narratives accorded on values and how they believed that values are strengthened by actions. These values are directly connected to culture.

**Culture.** Families mentioned that good judgment and leadership start in the home. Their quotes alluded to the idea of *el ser bien educados* (politeness), family first (familismo), *consejos* (ancestral knowledge), and role modeling. I considered these concepts as part of cultural traditions and ways of doing. The values of respect, spirituality, hard-work, and humbleness along with the idea of politeness, familismo, ancestral knowledge, and traditions are deep-seated in the Latino culture. Joseph (2000) says that culture can be interpreted as symbols and rituals that are woven into the activities that are significant to members of the culture. These symbols and rituals help individuals' socialization and understanding of their lives and values.

The Garcia's shared that good judgment starts at home. They mentioned that they lead their lives full of respect for all people and lead their children by example reminding them that family is first and needs to stay together. The Hernandezes talked about politeness and the way they teach their daughters this value. They show their daughters that politeness paired up with good manners shows respect to themselves and to others. Lastly, the Martinezes viewed *consejos* as a way to honor their ancestors' knowledge.

**Continuous education/ lifelong learning.** This code denoted actions parents conducted to further their education. Some of them continued in GED and ESL classes. Others were involved in activities that supported their development in their jobs. Still, others engaged in the community in ways such as volunteers with community organizations. The youth shared their intentions to continue higher education. They commented on their plans to pursue a university degree or continue in the next level of higher education with a master's degree. I considered lifelong learning here because it is present regardless of the formal, non-formal, or informal education families are currently engaged with or plan to continue. Lifelong learning represents the learning that should occur in the individual's life and in all forms of education.

**Motivation.** This represents an enthusiastic approach to learning and the education of children and parents. Motivation came across as an inhibitor of self-doubt. Some interviewees denoted motivation as a way to boost their confidence. The motivation provided hope. Parents saw motivation as a catalyst for self-confidence. For the youth, it is a way to continue their education and professional journey. The families' children talked about the importance of making their parents proud by attaining a higher education degree. They mentioned that the pride of completing a college degree was not only for them but for their families. Basically, motivation was a positive approach that keeps them moving forward.

**Hopes.** In a separate section, families shared their hopes for the Latinx community. Even though this was previously considered as part of the potential themes emerging from the narratives, I decided that this part deserved its own section because of the significance hope has in present times. These families' hopes underlined social justice issues and at the same time emphasized optimism. Their hopes must be cherished and acknowledged. The hopes families shared were about:

- Respect, acknowledgment, value of the Latinx community
- Equity and access to education, health, safety
- The wish for more Latinx graduates
- Investment in education (equity in funding)
- No more stigmatization of the Latinx community
- Coalition building among People of Color

In conclusion, the lessons the family narratives provided revolved around themes that were also mentioned in the literature and stated above. These took shape as the narratives pointed to more themes or highlighted those previously considered. I feel important to underline a comment consistently made in the conversations. Participants referred to the way the current demagoguery portrays the Latinx community. This demonization of the community afflicts the families and places them in a state of continuous fear, more so the undocumented members of families. Thus, I found that it was needed for me to create a space to capture their hopes. Moreover, their hopes point out to their needs and illustrate their hopes for the future. Overall, this issue provides me with an additional lens to the analysis of this research. An additional lesson learned relates to the acknowledgment of the current fear of these families. The underlying issues here are institutional racism and layers of inequity. These issues ought to be addressed in programs that support families in their education pathway. These programs and activities should offer a safe place for families to come together and not only learn about the education system but be able to talk about their fears and connect with community resources.

### **Compare and Contrast from the Literature Review**

The themes that arose from the interviews were intergenerational learning, school and community engagement, obstacles navigating the education system, values, culture, continuous

education, and motivation. I divided these into assets and barriers. The assets align with some of the literature included in this research. For example, I considered assets as familial capital. This concept stems from Yosso's (2006) cultural wealth model. This form of capital interacts in concert with the rest of the forms of capital proposed in her model: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, and resistant capital.

I placed familial capital as a focal point to better understand intergenerational learning and interactions from the families I interviewed, as this form of capital considers cultural pieces of knowledge fostered among family. I categorized ancestral knowledge, prior knowledge, and life knowledge as assets. These pieces of knowledge exemplified the concept of intergenerational learning in the narratives. Moreover, they are connected to the idea of funds of knowledge. Moll, et al. (2005) state that funds of knowledge are bodies of knowledge. These are cultural ways, life experiences, and assets of the immigrant families.

The school and community engagement are important to acknowledge, too. School and community engagement provided a springboard for parents to explore ways to collaborate and share their knowledge with others. However, it is important to note that engagement to these parents looked different from what the norm states. For these Latino parents, engagement was not linear, or "from parents to their offspring; that is, parents are responsible for providing the educational opportunities and resource for children to succeed in school" (Hurtado et al., 2010, p. 295). For these Latino parents, engagement encompassed different layers. It included the family unit in school engagement. For instance, the students and graduates I interviewed shared that their parents were involved in their education and community in different ways such as volunteering, making sure they participated in extra-curricular activities and helping them find homework support with neighbors or the neighborhood community organization. In addition, the

youth mentioned the way their parents' involvement was not exclusive to academics. Their support came in the form of care. For example, the care parents gave them was space, nurturing, and silence when needed. Also, they mentioned the support between siblings and other members of the family in academic tasks. The Garcia's emphasized that programs that support immigrant parents learning are beneficial, not only to their children but to them, because they felt that they could contribute with what they had learned with their families and other families as well.

Likewise, some of the elements that emerged from the themes revolved around culture. These are role modeling, which includes family values; culture, which encompasses traditions and language; and the idea of different perspectives, which I consider to be intrinsically linked to borderland stories and experiences. These elements are linked to culturally relevant approaches to learning, a value-based standpoint, and the multiplicity of experiences that immigrant families bring to the community and learning spaces. Therefore, culture is not narrow. Research by Moll, et al. (2005) emphasizes the breadth of this concept. They remind us that "households draw from multiple cultural systems and use these systems as strategic resources" (p. 10) and Delgado (2006) adds that "community and family knowledge is taught to youth through such ways as legends, corridos, storytelling, and behavior" (p. 114).

Furthermore, the value-based understanding among families was recurrent in the interviews. One of the values that the families alluded to the most was the value of respect. Families built their learning based on respect to themselves and others, this was intertwined with familismo or the mutual support each between the members of the family (Lopez, 2006). Along with that understanding, Dewey (1935) deems important that home life is included in school life, "that it should take up and continue the activities with which the child is already familiar in the home" (p. 35). Also, the borderland –border stories and experiences, in its "constant state of

transition” (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 25) give families the easiness to apply different perspectives in various situations and use those as needed for better navigation of systems.

In contrast, families revealed obstacles faced through the education system. These were noted as low English proficiency, limited information in Spanish, inadequate access to health, limited financial aid options, immigrant status, and a sense of belonging. These presented hindrances along the way. The education system was disorienting to immigrant parents. These parents mentioned the lack of accessible information in their mother tongue and their low proficiency in English. Some parents said they did not feel welcomed by the school administration, and that some advisors dismissed their child’s motivation to enter a prestigious preparatory school because of their heritage.

From the stories that parents shared, it was clear that they looked for ways to engage in school, but the barriers presented prevented them from more active engagement. This does not mean that they neglected their children’s academic success. Personally, the difficulties in overcoming these barriers might give an impression of passivity from the Latino parents in the eyes of teachers and administrators. This might fuel the idea that Latino parents do not care about their children’s education.

Teachers and administrators in the school need to consider a counter-narrative. Research by Viramontes, Anguiano, and López (2012) indicates that Latino parents show great respect and encourage the education of their children. The issue parents pointed out during the interviews was the lack of resources in their language. This absence of adequate information led to confusion as families went through the education pathways.

Tornatzky, et al. (2002) state that many parents of first-generation Latino students find the higher education system confusing. Youth identified challenges such as limited financial aid

options, immigrant status, and a sense of belonging. Concerning financial aid, for instance, an Excelencia in Education (2017) Fact Sheet on Latinos in Education and Pell Grants indicates that for the academic year 2011-12, Latinos were the third-largest group among Pell Grant recipients. Latinos represented 19% in comparison to Whites (47%) and African Americans (24%). The average Pell Grant, or money offered to low-income students, Latinos received that year covered about 20% of the total cost of attendance, or \$3,500.00. In the same year, 31% of all Latinos receiving Pell Grants also received institutional grants or money provided by the universities.

These numbers give perspective to the worries Latinx students have when considering higher education. Regarding undocumented youth, more than 450,000 undocumented students are enrolled in postsecondary education as estimated by New American Economy and the President's Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration (2020). Undocumented students need to find alternative ways to pay for their education which means even more challenges. For them, the option to receive financial aid loans is nonexistent.

Additionally, the youth in this study pointed out the difficulty belonging in the classroom. They mentioned the feeling of invisibility in school. One of them mentioned the lack of Latinx professors at her university. Another young participant revealed how some teachers in her high school dismiss the ways she does want to engage with the subject matter. In those regards, Solórzano and Bernal (2001) argue that “although students of color are holders and creators of knowledge, they often feel as if their histories, experiences, cultures, and languages are devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within formal educational settings” (p. 106).

To conclude, the assets identified in the narratives provide significant elements that can be integrated into intergenerational learning programs and other initiatives, programs, or

activities that support family engagement and learning. The barriers present an opportunity for reflection and encouragement to find transformative and sustainable solutions.

### **Presentation of Findings**

In order to answer the questions that guide this research and identify the lessons families provide to inform other Latinx families about the navigation of the American education system and higher education attainment, each question intertwines the data collected from the individual and family semi-structured interviews. The central question is presented first, and subsequently the secondary questions.

Latino families care about their children's education. The typical trajectory and navigation of education are not linear for Latinx students. Many of the educational decisions are made in conjunction with their families; consequently, the more involved and well-informed parents and caregivers are about schooling the more supportive they tend to be (Hurtado, Cervantez, & Eccleston, 2010).

This research collects the lessons from parents and caregivers that attended an intergenerational family program based in a local university to answer this essential question. *“What can we learn from Latino families who participated in intergenerational family programs about navigating the American education system for their children's attainment of higher education?”* It was important for me to learn about them individually.

All the families are immigrant and I wanted to honor that. First of all, the Martinez, Garcia, and Hernandez parents shared their stories. They talked about their homeland, their childhood, and their young years. They shared their border stories and their immigrant stories. The mothers and father talked about the struggles they faced as new immigrants and how they found ways to adapt to the new culture, language, and ways of doing. The youth expressed their

concerns about access to education and immigration issues. They mentioned their challenges, and the way their parents have supported them and how responsible they feel to complete their studies because it is their way to honor their parents’ sacrifices. The conversations were salient and provided seven themes that relate to their struggles but also their resources. The emergent themes provide a dichotomy. They referred to intergenerational learning, school and community engagement, obstacles navigating the education system, values, culture, continuous education, and motivation. Some of these denoted the challenges and some of the assets that families and individuals have. I combine this as follows in Table 5.1 Families and Individuals Assets and Barriers.

Table 5.1 Families and Individuals Assets and Barriers

<b>ASSETS</b> (familial capital)	<b>BARRIERS</b> (obstacles navigating the education system)
knowledge (ancestral knowledge, prior knowledge, life knowledge)	financial aid
engagement (school and community)	access to health
role modeling	sense of belonging
Culture	immigrant status
different perspectives	low English proficiency
continuing education (lifelong learning)	limited information in Spanish
motivation	acknowledgment of immigrant families and their needs in the school and higher education system

The lessons learned during these conversations were related to these assets and barriers. When parents referred to the family program, they mentioned the significance it had in giving them the resources they needed to engage more in their schools or communities. It provided them with information that helped them understand the system of education more. The program encouraged an extra level of motivation as it helped lift self-confidence.

The study sub-questions offer the families’ insights. These interweave their notions of intergenerational learning programs and higher education, along with lifelong learning.

Furthermore, in table 5.2. I present the common themes and a collection of related quotes by each participant.

Table 5.2. Common Themes and Related Quotes by Research Participant

Pseudonym	intergenerational (learning exchange, resources)	school and community engagement	obstacles navigating the education system	values	culture	continuing education/lifelong learning	motivation
Lupe	Even though my father did not study much, he taught me the math in a peculiar way, that is the way I taught my daughters	He volunteered to work in the garden and in the community removing the trash	We did not know how to manage the education of our daughters; we did not have the information. Our eyes were closed.	My mother told all her daughters and sons that the person who does not study is like a person that does not see.	You can’t be a leader if you can be a leader at home.	I do not want to lose sight of what I started, I am currently taking classes to complete my GED, I am studying for me	We are the key to the opportunities we want our children to have. My children will continue to open five and more doors. When we are motivated we can transmit that to our children.
Andrea	When I see her progress the way she has made the person I am, she encouraged me to be outspoken and speak my mind and work hard for what I want and let people know my opinion	My mom has been involved in my school since I was a little girl.	Unfortunately, we do not have enough financial support, Latinos and African American are the ones who suffer the most from this issue	I want to do this not only for me but for them, I want to make them proud	My parents’ personalities molded mine.	they’ve always supported me; they’ve always encouraged me to keep on going. Even after my bachelor's, they will push me to get my masters.	My mom has gone to school to learn English, me seeing her progress the way she has made the person I am now.
Martha	My biggest gift is knowing that my daughter took upon what I learned to advocate for her children.	Now I share my experience with other parents in the community organization. My community is made up of Latinos and African Americans. We talk about different topics that afflict us, some of	There was no one in the meetings to translate and I decided there was nothing for me because I didn't understand anything. And I did not go back to those meetings at	I want my daughter to be a professional. Along the way, I have knocked on many doors thanks to the information I had access to	<i>el buen juez por su casa empieza</i> – the good judge starts by judging his own home. I had to start my family	I learned to advocate for me and my family and search for what I wanted.	Grab your wings and expand your world, I was left with that lesson.

		them are mental health and education.	the high school anymore.	through the parent program.	involvement in my home.		
Juan	I do not know much about school, but Martha said that math is math and it is the same in whatever kind of language, that is how she taught them math, the way she best knew.	I am always working, but I joined some of the events at Nina's elementary school. I enjoyed the gatherings at the end of the year with the other families.	It was difficult for us, we did not know the language, it was even more difficult for her because at that time I was not able to help her, I had to work.	we try to lead a healthy life and to get along as a couple and instill in our children that here in the house there is a respect, above all, before the brother, the sister, the friend, the neighbor, respect for all people.	We might be poor, but we are <i>bien educados</i> , we respect people above all.	I took a course to learn more about my job, I want to do my job well.	We have not taught our children to see that things can't be done no matter how dark the picture is, we always tell them that there is a solution even if it looks dark that's the most important thing in the family.
Nina	My mom and my sisters tried to help me with my homework.		I was confused about how to enter the higher education process like how to choose colleges.	The pride of being able to graduate from school I owe to everyone in my family because everyone has fought for me to come to that, my family has always given me what I need to get to that.	I appreciate different perspectives and respect their views.	The class [in the summer program] I took at the university, opened my eyes because I learned more about healthcare to see how my journey is going to be.	I want to help families who need it most, just as my family needed it.
Rosa	I do not have much schooling myself, much of what I know I learned from my mother or my aunts.	[at the community organization] they were very helpful to my children, some young people came to help the children with school, and they invited the mothers to meetings.	Placing the children in school was complicated for me because I did not understand many things, the kids needed to get to the doctor, and I did not know how to pay for that or how would I pay for that. I did not understand English and I did not get things right	Things were difficult for us at the beginning but <i>con el favor de Dios</i> [with God's favor] everything started to get better.	<i>La familia es primero</i> , [family is first] we need to take care of each other and be united, this way we can all survive	I am taking English classes.	We came to this country with so that our children had better opportunities than the ones we had at home, I always tell them to be humble and hardworking
José	When I was in Mexico, I learned so much from my grandpa, . He taught he taught me to count using	I am a soccer fan, so I coach in the youth soccer team in my community. It keeps me active and helps	My parents and I struggled to navigate the American system of education. To be honest I was lost	respect is the highest of values, that despite the fact that we were poor, we	[my parents] gave me their <i>consejos</i> , [advice] and their life	I try to stay abreast of what is trending in the industry. I do research	going to college was no question for me, I wanted to honor my

	corn knobs. We used to de-grain them together. He taught me how to treat the land. He was very savvy, he used his logic and ways his ancestors taught him. I still find that very intriguing.	me give back to the community.	once graduating high school. The process to enter the university was confusing.	could never forget that respect, hard-work, humbleness, and gratitude would take us places.	lessons, and those are the most valuable to me.	and try to be active in my learning so I can be a better manager and share what I know with my team.	parents' sacrifices and give them the satisfaction to have a son with a college education
Laura	My brother and I had created this activity we would try to talk to each other in English we would teach each other how to pronounce words correctly, or as good as we possibly could to adapt to this culture and language.	My mother always found out activities for us, when I was in high school, we came along to a college fair that the community organization hosted...	I don't think I was prepared to face the struggles and barriers I had to overcome.  I remember that my English was definitely a work in progress when I was in class I tried, but sometimes my teacher would forget that I was there	My parents taught us to be humble and hardworking. It was not something they just said, but something they showed us every day.	In Mexico, parents teach you that you should be respectful to your elders to your peers. When I started school here it was really different there were rules but were not followed through.	I want to use my skills and resources and my network to have a great impact on communities financially wise and financially literate.	I want to continue my education. I am looking at applying to master programs right now.

### ***Intergenerational Family Learning Programs and First-Generation Higher Education***

#### ***Attainment***

Intergenerational family learning promotes interactions within the family. It encourages the passing on of knowledge, life skills, attitudes, and habits. It also creates opportunities for exposure to the perspectives of different generations (Boström & Schmidt-Hertha, 2017). It is important families understand this is and how it is useful to them as they maneuver a new education system to eventually reach higher education.

The parents interviewed for this research considered intergenerational learning from past generations and interactions between the same generation, in this case, the support their own children provided to each other. This shows that parents identified intergenerational learning as multidirectional. Intergenerational learning was not only bidirectional. They were diverse

interactions mentioned in the families' narratives. For instance, learning does not only occur between mothers and children. Multiple interactions are happening besides that of the mother-child. Furthermore, families talked about intergenerational learning in their narratives in the forms of connections to ancestors, behaviors, values, and cultural learnings. Intergenerational learning offered an anchor to ancestral knowledge and served as a channel to new learning among families. For example, José mentioned how he learned to think mathematically from his grandfather in the cornfields, and how Lupe taught her daughter based on what she learned from her father.

As I identified the families' understandings of intergenerational learning, I searched for the connection between these types of programs and the support they provide. Then, I turned to find answers to this question, "*how can intergenerational learning programs support Latino families in navigating the American education system for their children's attainment of higher education?*" Mostly, the families based their experiences on their participation in the Academy of Parents in Leadership (APL). The Hernandez family combined the experiences from APL and another program they participated in when their daughter was in middle school. Particularly, the mothers of the three households shared that it was important for them to lead by example and find opportunities for their children. The father referred to his wife's efforts in the education of their daughters. All the parents expressed that they came to this country in the search for better opportunities and livelihoods for their children. In my opinion, the central lesson these families provide this research is the underlining of other knowledges. The families denoted ancestral knowledge, prior knowledge, and life knowledge. These different forms of knowledge integrate familial capital or "those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community, history, memory, and cultural intuition" (Yosso, 2006, p. 48).

Moreover, immigrant parents are not familiar with the system of education when they arrive in the country. They need to be provided with accessible information so that their family has a smoother transition into schooling. Families mentioned the importance of connecting with other immigrant families. They highlighted that intergenerational family programs can create a place for community and support among the families. They mentioned that when schools support the creation of family spaces that provide immigrant families with a sense of belonging, parents are encouraged to be self-confident and rely on other parents for support.

Furthermore, the coming together of multiple families provided them with more information, as the intergenerational family program becomes a place for knowledge sharing among the participants in addition to a place to honor and continue their traditions. In the APL program, families were encouraged to bring a dish to share with others, and they also shared their experiences in the school and the community. In my experience, families who participate in any sort of parent engagement or family learning programs have children in different stages in the education continuum. The knowledge sharing the families referred to was about the sharing of struggles, experiences, and resources passed on to the families regarding the various levels of education. For instance, children's learning in the different subjects and grades, or high school students' confusions. Therefore, the concept of intergenerational learning becomes broader as it includes what I observed as multifamily learning. The intergenerational family program can provide a space for multifamily learning, and a place for inter-community learning. The fact that families have a space to share their knowledge and additional resources are provided through the intergenerational approach of the family program. This space allows for knowledge sharing and creation that ultimately support the navigation of the American education system in immigrant Latino families.

## ***The Role of Intergenerational Learning Programs and First-Generation Higher Education Attainment***

This research identified that intergenerational learning had been taking place for a long time in these families. The inquiry on the role of intergenerational learning programs and the attainment of a higher education degree goes back to the understanding of the holistic understanding of Latinx, immigrant families in addition to the understanding of the role of families in this equation. The second sub-question asked, *what is the role of intergenerational learning programs in the attainment of higher education of Latinx, first-generation students?* However, the narratives of these parents extended the question to their role in the creation of intergenerational learning programs. Therefore, the role of families in the creation of these programs is significant.

Parents bring assets and experiences that can enrich the program and result in better outcomes. Another role of these programs is to provide comprehensive information and resources to the families. The information helps families become more acquainted with the structure of the American system of education and its different options. Furthermore, the information and curriculum of these programs have to be inclusive. The curriculum has to acknowledge the families' diverse knowledges, culture, language, and values. Finally, the role of intergenerational learning programs should include co-creation. These programs must incorporate the families as co-creators of the curriculum and co-creators of knowledge.

### ***Lifelong Learning Experiences***

This research incorporates lifelong learning in intergenerational learning programs. This study recognizes lifelong learning as engrained in living and the learning process. It happens across long life-wide and life-long spectrums and it includes all forms of education.

Therefore, this sub-question queried about lifelong learning experiences, *what are the experiences that informed parents' lifelong learning journey and how do these inform their children own lifelong learning journey?* The participants referred to continuing education. It is clear that continuing education is included in the definition of lifelong learning. Continuing education is considered non-formal education. According to UNESCO (2020), non-formal education refers to education that occurs outside the formal school system. It caters to people of all ages but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway-structure. It is short and is presented in the form of short courses, workshops, or seminars. Non-formal education is often used interchangeably with terms such as community education, adult education, lifelong education, and second-chance education.

On that account, parents and youth shared the activities and classes they are enrolled in. For example, Mrs. Hernandez is enrolled in GED classes; she has been taken these classes for some time. She expressed her willingness to complete her GED. Her daughter mentioned her plans to continue in a master's program once she graduates from college and finds work.

The Garcia's mother mentioned her community activities. There she interacts with other families and members of the community. That is the way she continues her engagement in learning. Her daughter is in high school. She is actively involved in extra-curricular programs. For instance, she participated in a college preparation program. She shared her experience and her feelings about taking college classes and visiting a university for the first time. Based on her observations, access to college preparation programs might help families navigate higher education. This is another element that might be included as an extension of the intergenerational learning programs.

The Martinezes indicated that they continue their engagement in learning in their workplaces via professional development. The daughter mentioned her exploration of master's programs. The mother is taking English as second language classes and plans to continue learning the language. She is also engaged in a community organization in her neighborhood.

In general, the engagement of these families with learning across the education continuum demonstrates that lifelong learning is present in their lives and takes the shape of continuing and higher education. Lifelong learning exists in life in the forms of formal, non-formal, and informal education. The educational activities that these families have undertaken show its occurrence.

### **Implications and Recommendations for Practice**

#### **Implications**

The lessons learned from the families who participated in this study emphasize the importance of centering family stories in the planning, development, and implementation of intergenerational family programs that support the understanding of the American education system in Latinx immigrants. The family narratives presented here provided a broader understanding of the significance of honoring the families' knowledges. They suggested a new approach, and that is the inclusion of family narratives. They are essential pieces in the creation of inclusive and integral supports given to Latinx students interested in pursuing higher education.

#### ***Family Stories***

The family and individual narratives unfolded in a very authentic way. Each person enthusiastically shared a little bit about themselves. Some expressed the most nostalgic passages about their childhood; others magically portrayed their hometowns, and they told their stories of

love. The immigrant born shared their borders stories and pointed out the difficulties they experienced in trying to adapt to their new lives and their new country. Families shared their favorite folksongs, traditions, and recollections of their ancestors' wisdom. These narratives contained a plethora of experiences. The inclusion of family stories in family learning programs that support Latinx families is essential. Family stories inform the curriculum in ways that are culturally relevant and provide opportunities for supportive relationships among the families.

Additionally, their narratives pointed out other elements such as familial capital, assets, barriers, curriculum development, funding, and advocacy. I suggest that educational institutions consider these elements as part of a comprehensive curriculum dedicated to supporting Latinx families in their navigation of the education system and provide or advocate for adequate funding to institutionalize family learning programs. Intergenerational learning programs should also consider each of these elements as they build and implement their curriculum. The following explanations of the recommended elements connect the families' narratives and the research.

### ***Familial Capital***

The knowledges fostered in the family are often overlooked by programs that intend to support or engage parents. Yosso (2006) identifies other forms of capital that Latino families utilize in the navigation of systems, but I consider familial capital to be of great significance in intergenerational learning family programs. Familial capital highlights other knowledges and practices rooted in families' memories, traditions, and beliefs. These knowledges can enrich the development and implementation of intergenerational family programs. Therefore, familial capital is an essential element in the planning, development, and implementation of Latinx family learning programs.

### ***Family Assets***

Connected to the understanding of familial capital, family assets are knowledges such as ancestral knowledge, prior knowledge, and life knowledge. Along with that, experiences and learning that families bring with them. Families bring along their culture, language, and traditions. Educational institutions and family programs must understand the gifts families bring with them, their motivation, their funds of knowledge, the ways they navigate systems in a new country, and the ways they navigated systems in their own countries. Families have their own system of survival that needs to be approached from an asset-based understanding. Higher education institutions need to include the family assets in the development of programs that benefit families of incoming Latinx college students and provide comprehensive information in their language.

### ***Family Barriers***

Challenges continue to appear as the journey through education goes on for Latinx families. Some of these barriers were mentioned by the families in this study. These were financial aid, access to health, sense of belonging in the education system, immigrant status, low English proficiency, limited information in Spanish, and the little acknowledgment of immigrant families and their needs in the school and higher education system. Recognizing the barriers parents and students face can provide stronger foundations to intergenerational programs. Collectively, parents and programs can focus on exploring transformative solutions to the pressing issues of the families.

### ***Curriculum Development***

With no doubt, the approach to the creation and implementation of the curriculum of intergenerational learning programs must be culturally responsive. Families connected their

struggles in the navigation of the system of education with low proficiency in the English language and the little acknowledgment of their needs and assets by the education system. A culturally responsive curriculum that includes familial knowledges, offers bilingual materials and access to resources, and creates a space for traditions, values, and cultures can be more effective in supporting Latino families in their educational endeavors.

### ***Funding and Advocacy***

Mothers mentioned that their participation in the program gave them the little extra push they need to feel more confident about themselves. They embraced their talents and honored their wisdom. They pointed out that funds for activities or parent programs seem to be unevenly distributed. In the case of two of these families, the APL program was offered in their school, and another family participated in the program based on the neighborhood community organization. Usually, additional programs and activities are funded by grant money. When these grants complete their cycles, or when funding is limited or exhausted, the programs disappear. I consider that funding for these programs should be strongly incorporated as part of the school's budget from Title I. The school system should be open to collaborations and welcome additional funding avenues from universities and foundations to be able to sustain and institutionalize intergenerational learning programs.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The data collection of this study occurred in the middle of a health crisis of incredible magnitude. The Covid-19 pandemic restricted the experience of visiting families and their neighborhoods. At the time I planned for the interviews to take place, a national shelter in place order took effect. Nobody was allowed to congregate or visit others due to concerns about spreading and being affected by the virus. I had to change the interviews from in-person to

virtual-only. This presented challenges such as navigation of technology by the parents interviewed and internet stability.

Another limitation included the lack of diversity in the families interviewed. Originally, the research intended to include families from other Latin American countries or communities. At the time I conducted the research, I found out that the families I had selected to interview were all of Mexican descent. I think their contributions to the research are very valuable, and I appreciate all the learning I got from their stories. In the near future, I would like to include the voices of families from other Latin American nations. I think this will enrich the findings and provide additional information to the support of Latinx first-generation college students and graduates.

Finally, the conversations might have been affected by the relationship I have with these families, in particular the mothers and the graduates. They might have been careful in their conversations, perhaps with the idea of not hurting my feelings or disappoint me. I shared with them a few times before the interviews that their decision to participate and share their opinions with me would not affect our relationship in any way.

## **Recommendations**

The lessons from these three families nurtured my own learning. The results of this study emphasized the lessons shared by the families during our virtual interactions. The study revealed additional research and practice needs. I recommend a few.

First of all, I recommend including other groups of parents of color. There is a need for building a coalition among Communities of Color in issues of education and equity. The foundations of this coalition building should be guided by community organizing. Community organizing can be effective in establishing support networks and facilitate connections and

conversations between communities. In addition, the role of universities and diverse community partnerships is vital in this development as both can bring complementary resources and different communities together. As a result, coalition building could lead to the creation of spaces and programs that could unify advocacy efforts, seek funding, and encourage community building across groups.

Secondly, I suggest that families' funds of knowledge, including cultural, linguistic, communal, and historical knowledge, should be taken into consideration in a curriculum that supports the navigation of the American education system. Therefore, families' funds of knowledge and the idea of lifelong learning must be included in the curriculum of intergenerational family programs to facilitate the continuous involvement of families in the educational pathway. I recommend the incorporation of culturally relevant and asset-based approaches in the curriculum design, development, and implementation of intergenerational learning programs. Additionally, I advocate for the inclusion of parents and community organizations as thought partners and co-creators of the intergenerational learning program and materials. I emphasize the importance of building a network of community partners that extend the reach of universities in regard to resources and connections in the support of the families and their children's educational endeavors. By including these elements in intergenerational programs, early foundations are established and are nurtured throughout higher education. With the support of these networks and partnerships, first-generation college students could get the information they need to enroll, stay, and graduate from higher education institutions.

Third, I recommend delving deeper into the experiences of Latinx first-generation college students and their journey in higher education. A better understanding of their experiences throughout the education system can provide strategies for their access, retention, and persistence

in higher education. I recommend creating community spaces for middle, high school students and first-generation college students to share their experiences, joys, struggles, and information. The opening of opportunities for engagement and conversations with first-generation students can support further research and offer best practices.

Overall, this research presented valuable findings and provided meaningful insights. Based on the learning from these families and the reflections on my work with parents through my career, I am currently working on a parent engagement initiative on the west side of the city. It introduces a comprehensive parent engagement process that is culturally relevant, provides educational and employment pathways, restorative practice, community asset-based understanding, and Black/Latino coalition building. I am forever grateful for the lessons these families offered me unconditionally.

### **Researcher Reflections**

Thinking back on my interactions with the Hernandezes, Garcia's, and Martinezes, I recollect significant moments. First, I remember the vivid narrations of the families' stories. In our online conversations, they recounted their days before the pandemic. Through their accounts, I perceived intergenerational learning as very subtle, almost imperceptible in the rush of their everyday routine. Though, I reflected, if educators and researchers paid attention to the intergenerational learning process, opportunities to explore the views of the ancient, the old and the young interchangeably can be included in the classroom and in programs that contribute to immigrant families educational experiences. Second, I appreciated their immigrant experiences and admired their tenacity and resilience. Their immigrant narratives centered on education and extended beyond it. They alluded to the challenges not only navigating the education system but

other systems such as healthcare and social services. They recounted the ways they used to thrive in a new education system, some shared their sentiments of invisibility.

Their statements captured my attention because I, too, connected with their experiences in many ways. I felt vulnerable at times. However, this connection and my vulnerability allowed me to understand them at a deeper level. I think this is an authentic and meaningful piece in this research. Third, the hopes families shared are thought-provoking. I considered them essential to continue the analysis of this research. Essentially, these hopes provide opportunities for additional research as they touch on issues that are important to them. These issues are directly connected to social justice as they voiced the inequities of systems, emphasized systems of oppression, and called out for coalition building. Finally, there were some low moments during the process. At times, I felt overpowered by the hardship these families experienced in their countries of origin and the US. On some occasions during our conversations, it was somewhat frightening to listen to the consequences of the system of oppression that permeates our lives. Moreover, the families' stories reminded me of my immigrant experience and the challenges I encountered trying to figure out the American system of education. Their experiences encouraged me to reflect on my own story at a deeper level. In the end, their stories helped me achieve a new level of consciousness and reassured me of my role and responsibility as an educator of color.

## **Conclusion**

Five years ago, I started my journey as a doctoral student. The idea of my research was inspired by the families I was working with back then. At that time, it was only an idea. Today, that idea has transformed into a reality. Surely, the research process was extremely exhausting, but at the same time, it was extremely rewarding.

With these words, I conclude my journey as a doctoral student and begin renovated as a Doctor in Education. I am empowered and motivated. I recognize and embrace my responsibility. I am now part of the 0.3% of Latinxs in the United States with earned doctoral degrees.

This research is part of my story and the stories of first-generation Latinx. Like many of them, I am an immigrant, first-generation graduate. I learned from the wisdom of my grandmother and the determination of my mother. I stumbled numerous times navigating and adjusting to a foreign education system, and a new life away from home. This dissertation is a compilation of the narratives of families, who like me, share some of the same challenges, cultural traditions, language, and hopes.

My research sought to learn from their stories and experiences. Certainly, the data gathering and analysis were exhaustive. This process was conducted during times of sorrow. The times of the devastating Coronavirus. Right now, people across the globe witness the fury of this virus from their windows. Others see it pass in front of them as they tend to the sick in hospital beds; others deal with it as they scrub the floors of hospitals, clinics, supermarkets, and laundromats. The Latinx community has been disproportionately affected by the crisis. This research centers on the narratives of Latinx families; therefore, I felt the need to capture this time as it is now part of their stories as well. Moreover, I was invited to their homes in an unconventional way that allowed us to connect in ways we did not think possible before. This did not minimize the value of stories that were meant to be heard in person. On the contrary, it provided additional flexibility, much needed for the families.

The narratives shared individually and as a family fueled me with inspiration and ignited my call for action. I know the responsibility I hold to my community, their stories reminded me

of that. This research is only the beginning of an advocacy journey for me. It provided me with a sense of responsibility. I remain positive about the significance of this research despite the fact that the "U.S. education system reinforces socioeconomic inequality across generations by spending more money on educating richer children than on educating poorer children" (Kaushal, 2014 p. 61). This is the reason why I have to advocate for educational equity for Families of Color.

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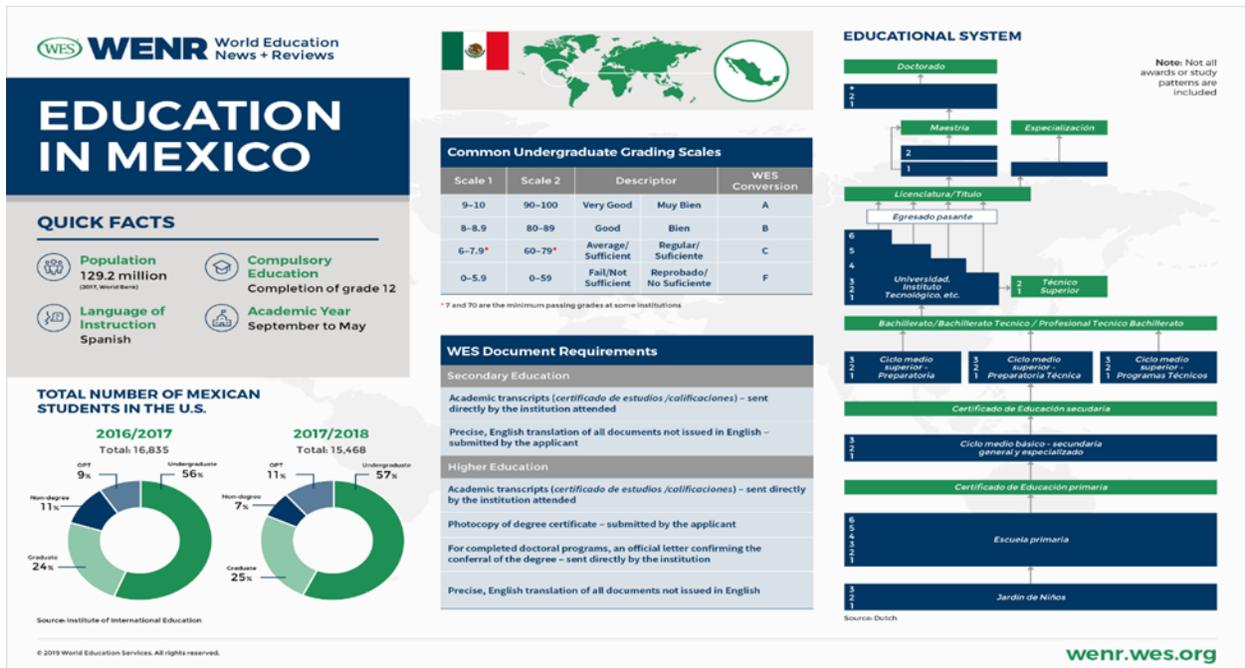
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# APPENDIX I

## Mexican Education System

<b>Educación Básica (Basic Education) Prek- grade 9</b>	<b>Educación Media Superior (Upper Secondary Education): Typically grades 10–12</b>	<b>Educación Superior (Higher Education)</b>
Educación Preescolar (early childhood education): Ages 3–6	Bachillerato General (general academic – high school)	Técnico Superior (post-secondary/associate/diploma)
Educación Primaria (elementary education): Grades 1–6	Bachillerato Tecnológico (technological education)	Licenciatura (undergraduate and first professional degrees)
Educación Secundaria (lower-secondary education): Grades 7–9	Profesional Técnico (vocational and technical education)	Postgrado (graduate/postgraduate education)

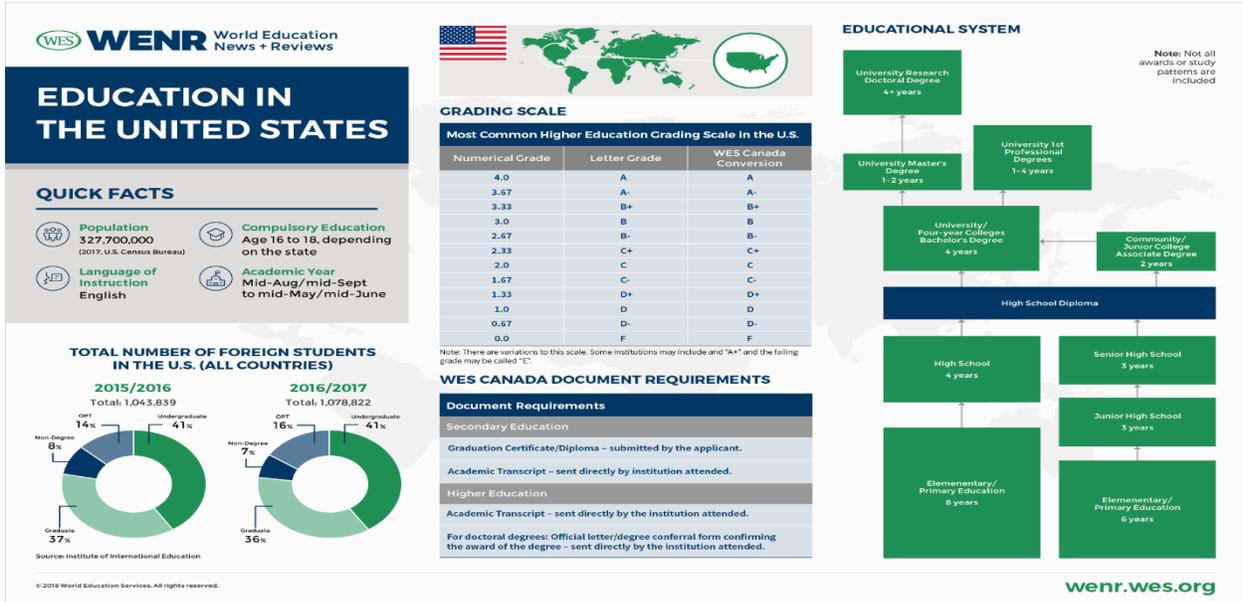
Source: World Education News and Reviews (2019)



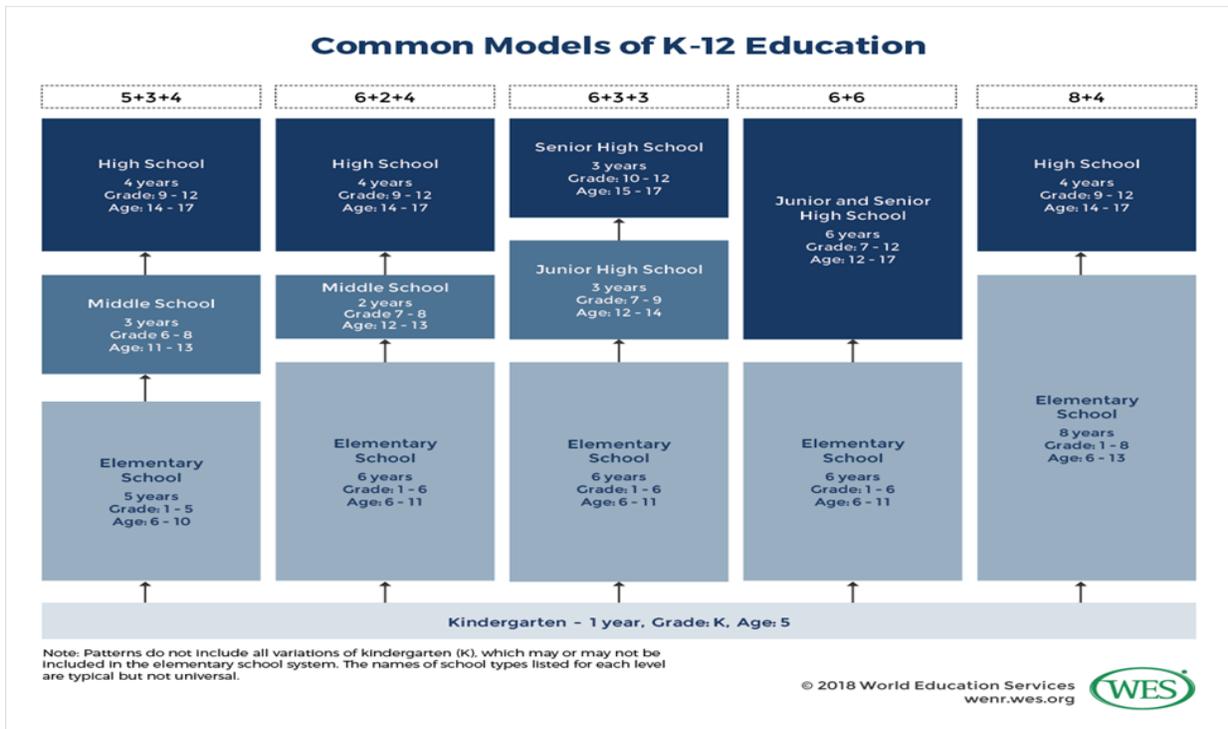
Mexican Education system infographic. Source: Monroy, C. & Trines, S., (2019) from World Education News and Reviews.

## APPENDIX II

### American Education System and Common Models of K-12 education



American education system infographic. Source: Bryce, L., (2018) from World Education News and Reviews.



Common models of K-12 education. Source: Bryce, L., (2018) from World Education News and Reviews.

## **APPENDIX III**

### **Consent Form**

Dear Parent:

You have been invited to contribute in a research-study to examine the stories of Latino families that participated in a family learning program and have high school students considering higher education, first-generation college students, or college graduates. These stories might provide information about the importance of understanding the American system of education in the achievement of higher education.

This research-study project will be conducted by Monica Haydee Ramos, doctoral candidate in Teaching and Learning: Curriculum, Advocacy, and Policy Doctoral Program at National Louis University. If you agree to take part in this research-study, you will be asked to do the following:

- 1) Agree to participate in a face to face interview conducted at your home. The interview will last approximately 30 – 45 minutes. I will ask questions about your background, and your family's education viewpoint.
- 2) Agree to participate in a second interview with your family. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. I will ask questions about your family's participation in an intergenerational family program.

Participation in this research study will take approximately two hours during the month of February or March. This time considers the two interviews. There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research study. Your participation is voluntary; therefore, you will not receive any direct financial benefits or payment. This research study will help us understand how an intergenerational family program with Latino families supported their understanding of the American system of education and their vision of education from a lifelong learning perspective.

You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. Your identity will be kept confidential. It will be strictly maintained by using false names at any presentations or publications based on the study as well as any documentation collected during the course of the research-study. Any information that may further identify you, such as address or place of employment, will be changed. Both interviews will be audio recorded for accuracy. The Spanish only interviews will be translated and transcribed by me. You may review the audio and request that all or any portions of it be destroyed. The hand-written notes I will take are going to be kept in a secured, locked cabinet. The notes, transcriptions, and translations I make electronically will be kept in a password protected computer. After the completion of this study, I will shred transcripts, translations, and notes, and erase all audio recordings.

I have explained this research-study to you and answered your initial questions. If you have any additional questions or wish to report a research-related problem you may contact me via cellphone at 773-766-3276, or by e-mail at [monica.ramos@my.nl.edu](mailto:monica.ramos@my.nl.edu), you may also contact Dr. Sara Efron at [sefron@nl.edu](mailto:sefron@nl.edu). For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the National Louis University's Institutional Research Review Board: Shaunti Knauth; email: [shaunti.knauth@nl.edu](mailto:shaunti.knauth@nl.edu); phone: 312-261-3526; NLU's IRRB is located at National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

Thank you for your consideration.

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Forma de Consentimiento

Estimado Padre, Madre, o Tutor:

Usted ha sido invitado a contribuir en un estudio de investigación para examinar las historias de familias latinas que participaron en un programa de aprendizaje familiar y tienen estudiantes de secundaria considerando la educación superior, estudiantes universitarios de primera generación, o graduados universitarios. Estas historias podrían proporcionar información sobre la importancia de entender el sistema estadounidense de educación en el logro de la educación superior.

Este proyecto de investigación-estudio será llevado a cabo por Mónica Haydeé Ramos, candidata al doctorado en Enseñanza y Aprendizaje: Currículo, Cabildeo y Política Pública en la Universidad Nacional Louis. Si acepta participar en este estudio-investigación, se le pedirá que haga lo siguiente:

1. Aceptar a participar en una entrevista realizada en su casa. La entrevista durará aproximadamente 30 – 45 minutos. Haré preguntas sobre sus historia personal y el punto de vista de la educación en su familia.
2. Aceptar a participar en una segunda entrevista con su familia. La entrevista durará aproximadamente 60 minutos. Haré preguntas sobre la participación de su familia en un programa familiar intergeneracional.

La participación en este estudio tomará aproximadamente dos horas en total durante el mes de febrero o marzo. No hay riesgos conocidos asociados con su participación en esta investigación. Su participación es voluntaria; por lo tanto, usted no recibirá ningún beneficio financiero o pago. Este estudio de investigación ayudará a entender cómo un programa de aprendizaje intergeneracional realizado con familias latinas podría haber contribuido a una comprensión del sistema educativo estadounidense y a una visión de la educación desde una perspectiva de aprendizaje para la vida.

Usted puede negarse a participar o retirarse de la investigación en cualquier momento sin penalización. Su identidad se mantendrá confidencial. Esta se mantendrá estrictamente restringida mediante el uso de nombres falsos en cualquier presentación o publicación basada en el estudio, así como cualquier documentación recopilada durante el curso de la investigación-estudio. Cualquier información que pueda identificarlo aún más, como la dirección o el lugar de empleo, será cambiada. Ambas entrevistas serán grabadas en audio para mayor precisión.

Las entrevistas hechas en español serán traducidas y transcritas por mí. Puede revisar el audio y solicitar que se destruya todo o parte de este. Las notas escritas a mano que tomaré se guardarán bajo llave. Las notas, transcripciones y traducciones que haga electrónicamente se mantendrán en una computadora protegida por una contraseña. Después de la finalización de este estudio, destrozaré transcripciones, traducciones y notas, y borraré todas las grabaciones de audio.

Le he explicado el estudio de investigación y respondido a sus preguntas iniciales. Si tiene alguna pregunta adicional o desea informar de un problema relacionado con la investigación, puede ponerse en contacto conmigo por teléfono celular al 773-766-3276, o por correo electrónico en [monica.ramos@my.nl.edu](mailto:monica.ramos@my.nl.edu), también puede ponerse en contacto con la Dra. Sara Efron en [sefron@nl.edu](mailto:sefron@nl.edu). Para preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante de la investigación, puede comunicarse con la Junta de Revisión Institucional de la Universidad Nacional Louis: Shaunti Knauth; correo electrónico: [shaunti.knauth@nl.edu](mailto:shaunti.knauth@nl.edu); teléfono: 312-261-3526; El IRRB de NLU está ubicado en National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

Gracias por su consideración.

Firma del Participante \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

Firma de la investigadora \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX IV**

### **Consent Form**

Dear College Graduate:

You have been invited to contribute in a research-study to examine the stories of Latino families that participated in a family learning program and have high school students considering higher education, first-generation college students, or college graduates. These stories might provide information about the importance of understanding the American system of education in the achievement of higher education.

This research-study project will be conducted by Monica Haydee Ramos, doctoral candidate in Teaching and Learning: Curriculum, Advocacy, and Policy Doctoral Program at National Louis University. If you agree to take part in this research-study, you will be asked to do the following:

- 1) Agree to participate in a face to face interview conducted at your home. The interview will last approximately 30 – 45 minutes. I will ask questions about your background, your education, future education plans, and your family's education viewpoint.
- 2) Agree to participate in a second interview with your family. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. I will ask questions about your family's participation in an intergenerational family program.

Participation in this research-study will take approximate two hours during the month of February or March. This time considers the two interviews. There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research-study. Your participation is voluntary; therefore, you will not receive any direct financial benefits, or payment. This research-study will help us understand how an intergenerational family program with Latino families supported their understanding of the American system of education and their vision of education from a lifelong learning perspective.

You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. Your identity will be kept confidential. It will be strictly maintained by using false names at any presentations or publications based on the study as well as any documentation collected during the course of the research-study. Any information that may further identify you, such as address or place of employment, will be changed. Both interviews will be audio recorded for accuracy. The Spanish only interviews will be translated and transcribed by me. You may review the audio and request that all or any portions of it be destroyed. The hand-written notes I will take are going to be kept in a secured, locked cabinet. The notes, transcriptions, and translations I make electronically will be kept in a password protected computer. After the completion of this study, I will shred transcripts, translations, and notes, and erase all audio recordings.

I have explained this research-study to you and answered your initial questions. If you have any additional questions or wish to report a research-related problem you may contact me via cellphone at 773-766-3276, or by e-mail at [monica.ramos@my.nl.edu](mailto:monica.ramos@my.nl.edu), you may also contact Dr. Sara Efron at [sefron@nl.edu](mailto:sefron@nl.edu). For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the National Louis University's Institutional Research Review Board: Shaunti Knauth; email: [shaunti.knauth@nl.edu](mailto:shaunti.knauth@nl.edu); phone: 312-261-3526; NLU's IRRB is located at National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

Thank you for your consideration.

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX V

### Parental informed consent for teenager's participation

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your teenager has been invited to participate in a research-study to examine the stories of Latino families that participated in a family learning program and have high school students considering higher education, first-generation college students, or college graduates. These stories might provide information about the importance of understanding the American system of education in the achievement of higher education. Please note that your family has been invited to partake in this research-study as well.

If you agree to give permission for your teenager to collaborate in this research-study, know that they will take part on an individual interview of 30-45 minutes. During the interview she/he will be asked about her/his experiences in school, level of education, education plans, and family's viewpoint on education. The interview will be recorded for accuracy. A second interview will be conducted with the parents and the teenager together.

Participation in this research-study will take approximate two hours during the month of February or March. This time considers the two interviews. There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research-study. Participation is voluntary; therefore, you and your teenager will not receive any direct financial benefits, or payment. This research-study will help us understand how an intergenerational family program with Latino families supported their understanding of the American system of education and their vision of education from a lifelong learning perspective.

You and/or your teenager may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. Your identity will be kept confidential. It will be strictly maintained by using false names at any presentations or publications based on the study as well as any documentation collected during the course of the research-study. Any information that may further identify you, such as address or place of employment, will be changed. Both interviews will be audio recorded for accuracy.

The Spanish only interviews will be translated and transcribed by me. You may review the audio and request that all or any portions of it be destroyed. The hand-written notes I will take are going to be kept in a secured, locked cabinet. The notes, transcriptions, and translations I make electronically will be kept in a password protected computer. After the completion of this study, I will shred transcripts, translations, and notes, and erase all audio recordings.

I have explained this research-study to you and answered your initial questions. If you have any additional questions or wish to report a research-related problem you may contact me via cellphone at 773-766-3276, or by e-mail at monica.ramos@my.nl.edu, you may also contact Dr. Sara Efron at sefron@nl.edu. For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the National Louis University's Institutional Research Review Board: Shaunti Knauth; email: shaunti.knauth@nl.edu; phone: 312-261-3526; NLU's IRRB is located at National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

Thank you for your consideration.

#### Agreement to Participate

I, \_\_\_\_\_ give permission for my teenager \_\_\_\_\_

to participate in the study \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's or Guardian's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Consentimiento de los padres para la participación del adolescente**

### **Estimado Padre, Madre, o Tutor:**

Su hijo/ja adolescente ha sido invitado para tomar parte en este estudio-investigativo que examinará las historias de familias latinas que participaron en un programa de aprendizaje familiar y tienen estudiantes de secundaria que están considerando la educación superior, estudiantes universitarios de primera generación o graduados universitarios. Estas historias podrían proporcionar información sobre la importancia de entender el sistema estadounidense de educación en el logro de la educación superior.

Este estudio-investigativo será conducido por Mónica Haydeé Ramos, candidata de doctorado del programa de Enseñanza y Aprendizaje: Currículo, Cabildeo, y Política Pública en la Universidad National Louis.

Si usted está de acuerdo en dar permiso para que su adolescente colabore en este estudio de investigación, sepa que participará en una entrevista individual de 30-45 minutos. Durante la entrevista se le preguntará sobre sus experiencias en la escuela, nivel de educación, planes educativos y punto de vista de la familia en relación a la educación. La entrevista será grabada con la intención de darle una transcripción exacta. Una segunda entrevista se llevará a cabo con los padres y el adolescente juntos.

Usted y/o su adolescente pueden negarse a participar o retirarse en cualquier momento sin penalización. Su identidad se mantendrá confidencial. Esta se mantendrá estrictamente restringida mediante el uso de nombres falsos en cualquier presentación o publicación basada en el estudio, así como cualquier documentación recopilada durante el curso de la investigación-estudio. Cualquier información que pueda identificarlo aún más, como la dirección o el lugar de empleo, será cambiada. Ambas entrevistas serán grabadas en audio para mayor precisión.

Las entrevistas hechas en español serán traducidas y transcritas por mí. Puede revisar el audio y solicitar que se destruya todo o parte de este. Las notas escritas a mano que tomaré se guardarán

bajo llave. Las notas, transcripciones y traducciones que haga electrónicamente se mantendrán en una computadora protegida por una contraseña. Después de la finalización de este estudio, destrozaré transcripciones, traducciones y notas, y borraré todas las grabaciones de audio.

Le he explicado el estudio de investigación y respondido a sus preguntas iniciales. Si tiene alguna pregunta adicional o desea informar de un problema relacionado con la investigación, puede ponerse en contacto conmigo por teléfono celular al 773-766-3276, o por correo electrónico en monica.ramos@my.nl.edu, también puede ponerse en contacto con la Dra. Sara Efron en sefron@nl.edu. Para preguntas sobre sus derechos como participante de la investigación, puede comunicarse con la Junta de Revisión Institucional de la Universidad Nacional Louis: Shaunti Knauth; correo electrónico: shaunti.knauth@nl.edu; teléfono: 312-261-3526; El IRRB de NLU está ubicado en National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

Gracias por su consideración.

#### Acuerdo para participar

Yo, \_\_\_\_\_ doy permiso para que mi adolescente \_\_\_\_\_

participe en el estudio \_\_\_\_\_

Firma del padre, madre, or tutor \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX VI**

### **Assent Form**

Dear Young Participant:

I would like to invite you to contribute in a research-study to examine the stories of Latino families that participated in a family learning program and have high school students considering higher education, first-generation college students, or college graduates. These stories might provide information about the importance of understanding the American system of education in the achievement of higher education. Please note that your family has been invited to partake in this research-study as well.

I am Monica Haydee Ramos, doctoral candidate in Teaching and Learning: Curriculum, Advocacy, and Policy Doctoral Program at National Louis University. I will be conducting the study. If you agree to take part in this research-study, you will be asked to do the following:

- 1) Agree to participate in a face to face interview conducted at your home. The interview will last approximately 30 – 45 minutes. I will ask questions about your background, your education, future education plans, and your family's education viewpoint.
- 2) Agree to participate in a second interview with your family. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes. I will ask questions about your family's participation in an intergenerational family program.

Participation in this research-study will take approximate two hours during the month of February or March. This time considers the two interviews. There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research-study. Your participation is voluntary; therefore, you will not receive any direct financial benefits, or payment. This research-study will help us understand how an intergenerational family program with Latino families supported their understanding of the American system of education and their vision of education from a lifelong learning perspective.

You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. Your identity will be kept confidential. It will be strictly maintained by using false names at any presentations or publications based on the study as well as any documentation collected during the course of the research-study. Any information that may further identify you, such as address or place of employment, will be changed. Both interviews will be audio recorded for accuracy. The Spanish only interviews will be translated and transcribed by me. You may review the audio and request that all or any portions of it be destroyed. The hand-written notes I will take are going to be kept in a secured, locked cabinet. The notes, transcriptions, and translations I make electronically will be kept in a password protected computer. After the completion of this study, I will shred transcripts, translations, and notes, and erase all audio recordings.

I have explained this research-study to you and answered your initial questions. If you have any additional questions or wish to report a research-related problem you may contact me via cellphone at 773-766-3276, or by e-mail at monica.ramos@my.nl.edu, you may also contact Dr. Sara Efron at sefron@nl.edu. For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the National Louis University's Institutional Research Review Board: Shaunti Knauth; email: shaunti.knauth@nl.edu; phone: 312-261-3526; NLU's IRRB is located at National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

#### Agreement to Assent

I, \_\_\_\_\_ give permission to be interviewed for the research-

study \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Young Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_