

UC Irvine

UC Irvine Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Parents and Education-based Professionals: Supporting Latine Students' Learning Experiences in the U.S. South

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/26n5k08c>

Author

Ponce Soria, Verenisse

Publication Date

2024

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Parents and Education-based Professionals: Supporting Latine Students' Learning Experiences in
the U.S. South

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Education

by

Verenisse Ponce Soria

Dissertation Committee:
Assistant Professor Adriana Villavicencio, Co-Chair
Senior Associate Dean and Professor June Ahn, Co-Chair
Dean Frances Contreras

2024

Dedication

To

Miguel Angel Ponce Torres and Maria de la Luz Ponce Soria

mis papas por darme vida, por sus sacrificios, por criarme con bondad y compasión, y por apoyarme infinitamente a pesar de todas las barreras que enfrentaron en la vida. Nunca les agradeceré lo suficiente a ambos. La vida no fue fácil para ustedes, pero se aseguraron de que fuera mejor para mí y yo usaré la vida que Dios me preste para hacer lo mismo por los demás.

my parents for giving me life, for their sacrifices, for raising me with kindness and compassion, and for supporting me endlessly despite all the barriers they faced in life. I will never thank you two enough. Life was never easy for you, but you made sure it was better for me and I will spend the life God gives me to do the same for others.

Table of Contents

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
VITA	vi
ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION	xi
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1: Literature Review	4
Southern Latine Educational Context	4
Latine Parent Involvement	7
Southern Latine Education Professionals	9
CHAPTER 2: Theoretical Frameworks	12
LatCrit.	12
Community Cultural Wealth	14
CHAPTER 3: Methods	16
Overall Research Approach	16
LatinxEd's Organizational History	16
Researcher Positionality Statement	17
North Carolina Population	19
Participants	20
Data Sources	20
Data Analysis	25
CHAPTER 4: Findings	27
RQ #1	27
RQ #2	35
RQ #3	47
CHAPTER 5: Discussion, Conclusion, & Implications	60
REFERENCES	66
APPENDIX A: Protocols	83
APPENDIX B: Codebook	93

List of Tables

		Page
Table 1	Participants per project	21

Acknowledgements

Over the course of the last 4 years, I've taken note of every single person who has sustained or supported me in the journey to complete my Ph.D. This dissertation is a testament to the power of community, mine in particular is pretty amazing.

En el transcurso de los últimos 4 años, he tomado nota de cada persona que me ha sostenido o apoyado en el camino para completar mi doctorado. Esta disertación es un testimonio del poder de la comunidad; la mía en particular es bastante increíble.

Me- for never quitting when I had the urge every other week.

My older sister, Caro- for the joy, laughter, and care she's always showed me.

My little sister, Gemma- for her endless love and kindness that sustained me.

My niece, Meili- for her smiles and reminding me to appreciate every second of life.

My partner, Eddie- for believing in me even when I didn't, for his words of encouragement, endless support, and all the times he fed me when I was too tired to cook.

My advisor, Adriana- whom I admire professionally and personally. Your leadership is invaluable, you showed me a path I had no idea how to navigate. You gave me endless critical and meaningful feedback that helped me grow monumentally. And you showed me that it's possible to be an incredible professional and an amazing mother.

My committee- for their time and commitment to this dissertation, for always supporting my ideas, and for taking me to the finish line.

Erika, Sergio, Lily, Grandma & Grandpa P. & Josiah- for giving me a family to rejoice with, for teaching me about life, for feeding me, for all the traditions you included me in, you gave me a home away from home.

Elaine, Ricky, Yuliana- for being the representation I needed, for their relentless commitment to our community, and for not just getting me TO grad school but through it.

Juli- for hearing me out every other week when I wanted to quit and for the infinite friendship that knows no distance or time.

Cristian- for engaging me in a conversation on Twitter that would lead me to UCI and being my first friend in California and becoming one of my best friends.

Yaz- for being an incredible friend, for the joy we share, and for singing your heart out with me, meeting you was a wonderful gift from God.

To all the students I've mentored- supporting you in chasing your dreams has sustained me in ways I hope you each one day have the distinct joy of understanding.

Lastly, to the community partners I've worked with who helped cultivate my dreams of making research practical and meaningful for the community.

VITA

Verenisse Ponce Soria

EDUCATION

- Ph.D. in Education 2024
with a specialization in Teaching, Learning, & Educational Improvement
University of California, Irvine
Dissertation: Parents and Education-based Professionals: Supporting Latine Students' Learning Experiences in the U.S. South
Co-Advisors: Adriana Villavicencio & June Ahn
Committee Adriana Villavicencio & June Ahn (Co-Chairs), Frances Contreras
- M.A. in Education 2024
University of California, Irvine
Qualifying Paper: Counter-narratives from Spanish and Chinese-speaking parents navigating school choice
Co-Advisors: Adriana Villavicencio & June Ahn
- B.A. in Public Policy 2020
with a concentration in Education Policy; Minor in Education
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

RESEARCH INTERETS

K-16 Policy & Program Evaluation
Educational Equity for Minoritized Communities
Research-practice Partnerships

RESEARCH POSITIONS

Research Project Manager, Reducing Inequalities for Immigrant, Multilingual Students in Secondary Schools, University of California, Irvine, 2022-Present
Mixed-methods study that evaluates the implementation of a school model that reduces inequalities for immigrant, multilingual students in secondary schools in eight sites across four regions in the U.S. Guided a team through the collection and analysis of two years of qualitative data (interview, focus group, observation, and artifactual data) translating insights into actionable recommendations for program design improvements. Effectively facilitated cross-functional collaboration among practitioners, faculty, undergraduates, and graduate students to develop and maintain project plans, schedules, budgets, and annual reports ensuring adherence to timelines and financial goals using Microsoft Sharepoint tools. PI: Adriana Villavicencio

Lead Research Consultant, The Latinx Education Center, 2023-2024
Provided culturally sensitive research support by collecting qualitative and quantitative data to assist clients in identifying the unique needs and strengths of Latine Education professionals in NC. Delivered key recommendations for fostering inclusivity and support for Latinx leaders in

education, effectively communicating findings through a written issue brief to inform a nontechnical audience.

Research Assistant, A Lever for More Equitable Access to Schools? Evidence from San Francisco, University of California, Irvine, 2021-2022

In partnership with the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), we conducted a mixed-methods study that enhances our understanding of the district's equity priority policy and its potential for reducing inequality in educational attainment. We developed a qualitative approach that supplements and builds on the quantitative component, conducting in-depth interviews in English, Spanish, and Mandarin. Our team employed Dedoose to analyze over 80 hours of interviews and provided the district with recommendations based on our findings. PI: Damon Clark & Co-PI: Adriana Villavicencio

Research Assistant, Orange County Educational Advancement Network: Facilitating a Network of RPPs at a County Scale to Better Support Housing Insecure and Foster Youth, University of California, Irvine, 2021-2022

Our team collaborated with Orange County private and public community organizations to develop a Networked Improvement Community (NIC). By facilitating group conversations, conducting empathy interviews, surveying system users, and executing a quarterly thematic analysis of data we pinpointed key insights that strategically guided the prototyping of a cross-functional team that serves as a county-wide support system in a large urban district in Southern California. PI: June Ahn

Program Assistant- Research & Development, The Latinx Education Center, 2019-2020

Designed and executed a robust program evaluation using Qualtrics for survey design, statistical analysis in STATA, and the development of focus group protocols. Spearheaded the incorporation of evaluation findings into the creation of a curriculum accessible to Latinx across all 100 counties in NC, demonstrating the ability to translate research insights into tangible, programmatic improvements. Effectively communicated research findings to a diverse range of stakeholders, including practitioners, researchers, and social media outlets, highlighting the capacity to bridge research outcomes with impactful design strategies for improved programming.

PUBLICATIONS

Ponce Soria, V. & Lozano Robledo, L. 2024. Nuestra Esperanza Issue Brief: What Latinx education leaders need to thrive. Published with The Latinx Education Center (LatinxED).

Wu T., Villavicencio, A., **Ponce Soria, V.** Racial attitudes among Asian American parents and their influence on school choice. *Accepted at Harvard Educational Review.*

Ponce Soria, V., Villavicencio, A., Wu T. Counter-narratives from Spanish and Chinese-speaking parents navigating school choice. *Submitted for review.*

Villavicencio, A., Wu, T., **Ponce Soria, V.**, Yoo, P.Y., Clark, D., Martorell, P. Why don't parents choose in-demand schools?: A mixed methods analysis. *Analyses in progress.*

PEER-REVIEWED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Villavicencio, A & **Ponce Soria, V.** (2024, April). Scaling a School-Level Model: Intersections of Policy and Practice for Schools Serving Newcomer, Multilingual Students in Symposium: Addressing and Dismantling Intersecting Inequities to Promote Educational Justice for Newcomer Youth (with Lukes, M., Suarez-Orozco, C., Cherng, Hua-Yu S., & Jaffe-Walter, R.) Accepted at Annual Meeting of the American Education Research, Philadelphia, PA.
- Villavicencio, A., Lukes, M., Brannon, T., **Ponce Soria, V.**, Riffenburgh, K., Garcia, D. (November, 2023). *Re-imagining School Leadership for Immigrant, Multilingual Youth*. Critical Conversation facilitated at University Council for Educational Administration Conference, Minneapolis, MN.
- Wu T., **Ponce Soria, V.**, Villavicencio, A. (2023, November) How racial beliefs of Asian American parents influence school choice. Paper presented at the Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM)
- Cawelti, L., Firestone, A., **Ponce Soria, V.**, Vaishampayan, G., & Wentworth, L. (2023, July). How do brokers help RPPs honor and integrate with their larger social-cultural, political, and historical contexts? Accepted at National Network of Research-Practice Partnerships Conference, Houston, TX.
- Ponce Soria, V.**, & Wu, T. & Villavicencio, A. (2023, April). School Choice among Chinese- and Spanish-Speaking Parents: Pursuing “Truth” and Counternarratives from Underrepresented Families. Accepted at Annual Meeting of the American Education Research, Chicago, IL.
- Villavicencio, A., Wu T., **Ponce Soria, V.** (September 2022 & May 2023) School choice parent interview findings presented to partner School District
- Ponce Soria, V.**, Van Steenis, E., Cawelti, L., Ahn, J., & Arum, R. (2022, March). Leveraging Community Assets in a Networked Improvement Community to Support Housing Insecure and Foster Youth. Poster presentation at the Carnegie Foundation Summit on Improvement in Education, San Diego, CA.
- Van Steenis, E., Cawelti, L., **Ponce Soria, V.**, Ahn, J., & Arum, R. (2022, March). Employing Participatory Design to Establish a Networked Improvement Community. Session presentation at the Carnegie Foundation Summit on Improvement in Education, San Diego, CA.
- Ponce Soria, V.**, Van Steenis, E., Cawelti, L., Ahn, J. (2022, April). Leveraging Community Assets in a Networked Improvement Community to Support Housing Insecure and Foster Youth. Roundtable presentation at the American Educational Research Association conference, San Diego, CA.

Van Steenis, E., Cawelti, L., Ahn, J., **Ponce Soria, V.** (2022, April). Employing Participatory Design to Establish a Networked Improvement Community. Paper presentation at the American Educational Research Association conference, San Diego, CA.

Ponce-Soria, V. (2019, October). Somos Carolina: Effect of a Curriculum Unit to Enhance High School Readiness of Rising Eighth Grade Latinx Students. 2019 FIU McNair Scholars Research Conference. Miami, FL.

Ponce-Soria, V. (2019, July). Somos Carolina: Effect of a Curriculum Unit to Enhance High School Readiness of Rising Eighth Grade Latinx Students. UNC-CH 2019 Summer Undergraduate Pipeline Research Symposium. Chapel Hill, NC.

Nichols, H., Holly, N., & **Ponce-Soria, V.** (2018, October). Early College High Schools and Rural Students' College Readiness. 2018 National College Board Conference.

MEDIA PUBLICATIONS

Villavicencio, A., **Ponce Soria, V.**, Riffenburgh, K., & Garcia, D. (2023) How Policy May Undermine Schools Serving Newcomer Immigrant Youth. Published via <https://www.immigratednextsophiarodriguezphd.com/post/how-policy-may-undermine-schools-serving-newcomer-immigrant-youth>

SERVICE

Lead Planner , OC Resource Fair Planner, UCI School of Education	2020-2022
Undergraduate Support Hub Mentor , UCI School of Education	2020-2022
Pathway Reader , UCI Writing Project	2020

INVITED TALKS & PANELS

Grad School 101-Lambda Pi Chi Sorority Inc.	2022
UCI McNair Scholars Program Panelist	2021
Somos Poderosas: Womxn Professionals in Education Panelist	2020

HONORS & AWARDS

North Carolina Latino Diamante Award in Education	2019
McNair Scholar	2018-2020

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

UCI Orange County Educational Advancement Network (OCEAN)
American Education Research Association
Latinas Promoviendo Comunidad/ Lambda Pi Chi Sorority Inc.

SKILLS & CERTIFICATIONS

Qualitative research methods	
Research project management	
Software: Dedoose, STATA, Microsoft Sharepoint, Zoom	
UCI Ocean Community Research Fellow	2021-2024
CITI Program IRB Training	2019
Center for Creative Leadership; Greensboro, NC	2018
National Career Readiness Certificate-Gold Level	2016
Word and PowerPoint 2013 Certification	2014
Spanish/English Bilingual (Reading, Writing, Speaking)	

Abstract Of The Dissertation

Parents and Education-based Professionals: Supporting Latine Students' Learning Experiences in
the U.S. South

By

Verenisse Ponce Soria

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Irvine, 2024

Assistant Professor Adriana Villavicencio, Co-Chair

Senior Associate Dean and Professor June Ahn, Co-Chair

The U.S. South, in spite of its racist Jim Crow era laws and political history, has the fastest growing Latine immigrant population in the country. In North Carolina alone, the Latine population is responsible for over one-third of the state's growth exceeding all other population groups. Despite this rapid-growing change, the state is third to last in its allocation of funding to support K-12 education, which disproportionately affects the learning experiences of marginalized groups in the state. Currently, literature on educational equity efforts in the South largely reflects the Black-White binary while literature on Latine students in particular is dominated by Western and Southwestern Latines. In such an environment where there is a rapidly growing population, an underinvestment in public education, a history of oppressive institutions, and educational equity efforts that largely reflect the Black-White binary, there is a special need to examine the experiences of Southern Latines. In this dissertation, I draw on data

from a Latine immigrant-led and Latine-immigrant-serving education non-profit organization in North Carolina. Grounded in LatCrit Theory, I draw on the perspectives of Latine parents and professionals in education-related fields to understand the barriers U.S. Southern Latine parents face when participating in their child's education and the barriers U.S. Southern Latine education professionals face to creating learning environments that affirm students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identities in North Carolina. I also use the Community Cultural Wealth Framework to understand how they leverage their resistant cultural capital to persist in non-affirming environments in the U.S. South. The findings in this study document the challenges and wealth in the stories of Southern Latines among the literature on Latine immigrant communities. This dissertation fills a necessary gap in U.S. Southern history that highlights progressive movements to advance educational opportunities for Latine students through the resistance to and persistence in oppressive institutions.

Introduction

In the past decade, it has become increasingly clear that there are new geographic trends for Latine immigrants settling in the United States¹. While the United States Latine population grew 19% in 2021 from 2010 (Krogstad et al., 2022), the Southern region of the U.S. saw a faster growth rate than any other region increasing by 26% just from 2010 to 2019 (Noe-Bustamante et al., 2020). Nationally, the growth rate in rural areas for foreign-born individuals is exceeding that for native-born individuals (Mathema & Hermann, 2018). This new population of Latine immigrant Americans in the U.S. South has created an entirely different set of education policy and practice issues to investigate (Weeks, Weeks, & Weeks, 2006). Moreover, scholarship about inequity in the U.S. South remains primarily dominated by the Black-White binary narrative or the historical and contemporary framing of racial dynamics in the United States as primarily revolving around the dichotomy between Black and White populations. However, the Black-White binary narrative often overlooks the diverse experiences and complexities within other racial and ethnic groups, such as Latines, whose unique challenges and contributions are essential to understanding and addressing inequities in the South and beyond.

To create changes in policy and practice that more effectively, and appropriately, support the learning of the Southern Latine population, their stories must be investigated, not just synonymized with the stories of Western and Southwestern Latines.² Prior research on U.S. Latine immigrant students has primarily focused on the experiences of the West and Southwestern regions including states like California, New Mexico, and Texas where U.S.

¹ In this study, Latine is used as a gender neutral, Spanish accessible term to capture the experiences of individuals with family roots in a Spanish-speaking Latin American country, regardless of their place of birth or Spanish language proficiency.

² In this dissertation I use the term “Southern Latines” to refer to Latines who reside specifically in the U.S. South region.

Latines have historically settled (Gutiérrez, 2016). Although U.S. Latines share common histories and cultures, regional differences may cause developmental and schooling experiences variance. The U.S. South has a socio-cultural, historical, and political context different from any other region in the country (Davis, 2008; Gutiérrez, 2016). Institutions in the U.S. South hold within them remnants of slavery and Jim Crow-era politics and the violent racist ideals inherent in these policies are often disguised as Christian religious beliefs (Davis, 2008). Educational institutions, policies, and practices born from this era can carry with them a culture that perpetuates both hate and inequity against individuals who deviate from the white, American-born, cis-gender, heterosexual identity (Kendi 2016; Massey and Denton 1993; Ray, 2019). This is important to investigate in this context as literature suggests that gaps between the academic achievement of white students and students of color may be explained by the negative correlation between racism and student outcomes (Allen et al., 2013; Kim & Calzada, 2019; Merolla & Jackson, 2019).

To delve into the experiences of U.S. Southern Latines in the education system and explore the challenges in non-traditionally receiving immigrant communities, I concentrate on North Carolina as a case study. North Carolina stands out due to its significant population growth, ranking highest in the U.S. South according to the latest estimates from the US Census Bureau (excluding Florida where Latino communities have historically been well-established) (NC OSBM, 2023). North Carolina alone has seen a substantial increase in the population with Latines accounting for over one-third of the state's growth which exceeded the growth of all other population groups (i.e., Black, white, American Indian & Alaska Natives, and multi-racial groups) (NALEO, 2020). With Latines now populating 10.7% of the state (up from 1.2% in 1990), the Latine population now compares to the Latine population in California in 1990

(Fulwood, 1991; Johnson et al., 2022; NALEO 2020; Tippett, 2021). However, North Carolina ranks third to last among all 51 states in its funding allocation to support K-12 public education (NC Public Ed at a Glance, 2022). Correspondingly, reports on the state of education in North Carolina demonstrate gaps between non-Latine and Latine students in key education and quality of life indicators. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) reports that across the state in the 2021-22 school year, Latine students had the lowest four-year cohort graduation rate of 80.1% and of all Latine K-12 students 14% did not meet their expected growth level on standardized tests (2022). These gaps between Latine and non-Latine groups in educational outcomes are preceded by the the largest underrepresentation among population groups in the University of North Carolina (UNC) System enrollment with Latines accounting for only 8% of university enrollment despite representing 20% of the K-12 student population (Facts & Figures Education in North Carolina, 2022). Though higher education is not the only path for marginalized, often low-income, families to achieve socio-economic (SES) mobility, prior research shows higher education is often associated with upward socio-economic mobility (Chetty, 2011; Chetty, 2020). Thus, supporting increased access to educational opportunities and investigating why NC Latine students are not performing better in schools is a critical social justice issue that can promote educational and economic equity in non-traditionally receiving immigrant communities whose Latine immigrant populations are rapidly growing.

This dissertation investigates the stories of North Carolinian Latines, a subgroup of U.S. Southern Latines, a group underrepresented in Latine education research. I highlight the stories of parents and education professionals, two key actors in supporting students' learning experiences. To do this, I draw on data collected across three different projects on parents and educational professionals by a Latine-led and Latine-serving organization in North Carolina. To

illustrate the U.S. Southern Latine experience, I capture the unique challenges of navigating U.S. Southern institutions yielding insights into how this context places barriers for parents and education professionals to create equitable learning environments that affirm Southern Latine students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identity across the educational pipeline. Additionally, I highlight how Southern Latine parents and education professionals resist and persist under continued oppression using their resistant cultural capital. As this new population continues to grow there is a strong demand by the community to design supports that will not just sustain prior progress, but build on the community's assets and push improvement beyond the current reality. Thus, the research questions this dissertation explores are:

1. How do Southern Latine parents describe their experiences when participating in their child's education to advance their educational opportunities?
2. How do Southern Latine education-based professionals (SLEPs) describe their experiences in the workplace when attempting to create a learning environment that affirms Southern Latine students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identity?
3. How do Southern Latine parents and education-based professionals leverage their resistant cultural wealth to persist in their journey to advance educational opportunities for Southern Latine students?

Literature Review

Southern Latine Educational Context

This dissertation is situated within the body of literature that documents the stories and explores the experiences of Latine immigrants, and children of immigrants, in the U.S. South. Literature on the U.S. South sparingly includes experiences beyond the Black-White racial

binary, making it critical to document the stories and presence of Latines in this region. For the first two hundred years of its existence, the United States witnessed a clear concentration of Latines in Western and Southwestern states which was due, in large part, because of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which transferred territory in modern-day Western states like California, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, and Colorado from Mexico to the U.S. (National Archives and Records Administration, 2022). The Southern U.S., which consists of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee (Rodriguez, 2012) was not historically, nor originally, populated by Latin American groups. To this end, any proposed advancements to further educational equity for Southern Latines must also carry an understanding of Southern Latine history and the migration patterns that have fostered their cultural history.

Migration of Latin American groups to the U.S. South began in the early 1900's. According to Weise (2015), U.S. labor recruitment brought Mexican workers into the Mississippi lumber industry and cotton fields in years as early as 1908 and in the 1920 census 1,242 Mexican-born "Whites" were recorded and revealed that between 1916 and 1920 Mexican immigrants started settling in Louisiana. This trend began as the result of U.S. labor market demands resulting from World War I and the Great Migration to the North to Jim Crow era laws. While World War I decreased U.S. immigration from Europe, the Great Migration to the U.S. North decreased the African-American workforce. Together, they drove up the demand for Mexican labor to supplant the loss of the workforce (Briggs, 2004; Weise, 2015). Since then, migration patterns for Latine immigrants in the South have shifted. Beginning in the 1980's, migrant streams to destination areas in the South were built by kin and other social networks (Burns, 1993). In later years, as the labor market in Western and Southwestern states became

saturated and the cost of living rose, Latines in those areas began migrating towards the South (Rodriguez, 1996). These flows of immigration have helped sustain large agricultural industries such as pork, poultry, tobacco, and cotton and remain relevant today (North Carolina Trade Facts, 2018). Family immigration histories remain a core part of how many Southern Latines describe their stories and paths into higher education.

As Latines have populated the U.S. South, the lack of representation in educational spaces has caused a slew of challenges that promote educational inequity. From explicit racism to implicit bias, the attitudes and behaviors of teachers, counselors, and coworkers result in a cultural mismatch in educational spaces that can negatively affect Southern Latine students learning experiences. This racism is an inherent attribute of most institutions that is reinforced through practice and policy (Kendi, 2016; Massey & Denton, 1993). Racism against racial and ethnic minoritized groups in education spaces though, is not a new concept and well documented in literature, though sparingly about Southern Latines (Camarrota 2014; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Rodriguez, 2023; Rodriguez & Monreal, 2017; Vélez, 2011). These experiences happen because organizations are racial structures, that both reproduce and challenge racialization processes (Ray, 2019). In many cases, even when organizations attempt to implement affirmative action, diversity, and anti-discrimination policies they do so out of fear, or performatively, and thus fail to create them effectively leaving People of Color frustrated and marginalized (Collins, 2011; Embrick, 2008; 2011; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998). These performative commitments to equity result in individuals often only enforcing “objective” rules that reinforce existing racial hierarchies which benefit whites and conveniently ignore policies aimed at diversifying or ending discrimination (Ray, 2019). These organizational actions and attitudes can result in long-term outcomes for people of color that affect their health, career trajectories, and political power

(Roberts, 2011; Sewell, 2016; Wilson, 1996). Thus, this dissertation explores how the experiences of Latine individuals such as parents and education leaders who support Southern Latine students in accessing educational opportunities and culturally affirming environments within educational organizations (i.e., K-12, higher education, and education related fields like counseling, education policy, and education non-profit work) are affected by the marginalization of institutional practices, policies, and norms.

Latine Parent Involvement in Children's Education

Parental involvement stands as a significant predictor of students' academic success, drawing considerable attention from educational researchers and policymakers over the years. The educational support immigrant parents provide constitutes a growing yet insufficiently studied subset of parent involvement literature. Many studies document the importance of Latine parental involvement in creating a home environment that complements and reinforces the learning experiences provided in school despite harmful myths that marginalized parents are uninterested in supporting their child's education (Ceballo et al., 2014; Giles, 2005; Grace & Gerdes, 2019; Grant & Ray, 2010; Langenkemp, 2019; Perreira et al., 2006; Trumbull et al., 2020). In a longitudinal investigation, LeFevre & Shaw (2012) investigated the impacts of both formal (visible to staff) and informal (invisible to staff) Latine parental involvement utilizing data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS:88). The authors found that both types of engagement emerged as noteworthy predictors of student academic success, with informal support demonstrating nearly equal influence compared to formal support, underscoring the importance of recognizing and fostering both formal and informal parental engagement.

However, despite notable positive effects on student academic success Latine parents still experience barriers to actively participating in their child's education. Antony-Newman (2019) who conducted a systematic review of 40 qualitative and quantitative studies concerning parental involvement among immigrant parents across North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia and found that immigrant parents encounter distinct hurdles to their engagement, primarily stemming from language barriers and unfamiliarity with the educational systems of host countries. In the U.S., Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 set precedent for providing equitable education opportunities to all students by prohibiting educational discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Shortly thereafter, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA) of 1974 stated explicitly that it is unlawful practice to fail to provide appropriate supports to overcome language barriers that impede students' equal participation in instructional programs. More recently in 2015, a memo was issued by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and U.S. Department of Education (DOE) upholding and reiterating that the provision of language supports is the legal standard. However, per the chair of the American Association of Interpreters and Translators in Education (AAITE), it's possible that many school districts believe they are compliant with these federal regulations by hiring bilingual employees rather than hiring and paying qualified interpreters for specialized work that more adequately supports the great demand for language support in schools which exceeds the capacity of teachers (Elliott, 2022). This lack of investment in translation and interpreter support in schools leaves parents still facing persistent language barriers in their attempts to advocate and participate in their childrens' education.

In addition to language barriers, parents also experience a cultural mismatch at school that results in decreased comfortability to participating and, often times, in discrimination. Prior

research shows that when there is a matching of parent and teacher backgrounds, parents may feel that there is an enhanced communication that overcomes language barriers and eradicates cultural differences driving them to feel more comfortable in their participation (Calzada et al., 2015). However, more often than not, parents experience cultural mismatches. This mismatch can lead to decreased parent involvement due to dissatisfaction with the cultural disparity between the family and the school (Barajas-Gonzalez et al., 2022; Griego Jones; 2003; Quiñones & Marquez Kiyama, 2014; Valenzuela, 2010; Villanueva, 1996) and is particularly concerning to undocumented parents who face fears of deportation (Cross et al., 2019; Enriquez, 2015). In addition to perceiving a cultural mismatch, many Latino, like Black parents, express feel rejected or ignored by school staff and experience racial tensions in schools (McCarthy Foubert, 2023; Muro, 2024; Poza et al. 2014; Quiñones & Marquez Kiyama, 2014), largely diminishing their ideas of the “American Dream” that many immigrants aspire to (Del Cid, 2011). While prior research largely documents the linguistic and cultural barriers Latine parents providing formal and informal support, this dissertation adds to the body of literature which investigates the experiences of a new, understudied, and rapidly growing group of Latine parents in the U.S. South. Not only do I investigate how the systemic barriers affect their experience in providing support, but I also highlighting the resistant cultural capital they leverage to overcome them and persist in advocating for their childrens’ education.

Southern Latine Education-Based Professionals

Research on Southern Latine students, though limited, provides evidence for continued, damaging racialized experiences in the U.S. South brought on by staff who lack cultural competence. Mellom et al. (2018) finds that Southern Latine students academic outcomes are

negatively affected by the negative cultural assumptions and prejudices education professionals have that perpetuate deficit perspectives and neglect students' linguistic needs. Along with parents, education professionals such as K-12 teachers, counselors, administrators, higher education staff, and education-based non-profit support professionals who create the educational ecosystem are critical actors in supporting the educational experiences of Southern Latine students. While this most discernably includes K-12 teachers, it also includes counselors, administrators, higher education staff, and education-based non-profit support professionals who all play critical roles and collaborate to support the educational outcomes of Latine students across the educational pipeline. Guidance counselors can support Latine students' socio-emotional development and provide culturally relevant college application support tailored to their documentation status, non-profits can provide supplementary identity exploration summer camps or linguistic interpreting support, administrators can advocate for culturally relevant practices within their schools, and higher education professionals can inspire students to pursue post-graduate degrees, (Armstrong 2020; Bañuelos & Flores, 2021; Muniz, 2013; Toomey & Storlie, 2016). This research illustrates the necessity for increasing the number of education professionals in the U.S. South who are representative of the students they serve. Representative staff are an essential components for creating a learning environment that affirms students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identities. However, similar to Southern Latine students and parents, SLEPs are also confronted with similar challenges with racism and discrimination in their workplaces (Champion & Wilson-Jones, 2023; Dalton & Villagran, 2018; DeSante, 2013; Dollarhide et al., 2013; Monreal, 2022; Orelus, 2020; Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2010; Spencer, 2017; Turaga, 2020). Scholars suggest that in communities where there is limited experience with diverse populations, sudden demographic changes can result in

misunderstanding and fear (Walker, Shafer and Iiams, 2004). This misunderstanding and fear, results in real and tragic disparities between the experiences of White and marginalized education professionals, putting SLEPS at risk for experiencing extreme emotional fatigue, burnout, and health issues (Hall, 1996; Okraski & Madison, 2020; Pizarro & Kohli, 2020).

Currently, most literature on SLEPs reflects the experiences of teachers. Monreal and Stutts (2023) conducted a comparative case study examining the experiences of two Latine critical social studies teachers in the U.S. South who have little support from their schools and describes their isolation in constantly navigating and negotiating their relationship to the policy, peers, and existing norms in this area. In a 3-year multi-site critical ethnography in the U.S. South, Rodriguez (2021) finds that while Latine undocumented students experience instances of racism, racialization, and racial inequality in interactions with their teachers, however the challenge in places like the U.S. South is that even when teachers attempt to advocate for students, they are entangled in larger ideologies that include the racist policy and politics of their state and local communities. Similarly, Monreal (2022) takes a qualitative approach to investigating the spatial/racial experiences of Latine teachers U.S. South and finds that despite trying to “make a difference” teachers describe their schools as hostile spaces where they experience explicit racism, isolation, and degradation (p. 59). However, in a ray of hope, the author highlights the importance this space has come to mean to Latines whose immigrant history allows them to call the U.S. South home. In this space, Southern Latine teachers have created loving bonds with immediate family, trusted friends, and community members. They describe these spaces of community, though small, as necessary to resist the hostility and oppression inside of schools.

Taken together, literature reveals that educational institutions perpetuate harmful narratives and biases that affect all People of Color within them, including SLEPs who are attempting to build supportive communities and learning environments that foster success for Southern Latine students. This dissertation adds to the extant literature on Latines in the field of education. However, I expand not just on the experiences K-12 teachers, but also on the experiences of all SLEPs who create the education ecosystem such as administrators, counselors, higher education staff, and education-based non-profit support professionals. I demonstrate the similarity in the challenges they experience as some of the very few Latine education professionals in the U.S. South who are advocating for Latine educational equity. In addition to highlighting the challenges SLEPs face to create a learning environment that affirms Southern Latine students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identity, I highlight the resistant capital they leverage to persist in isolating workplaces where newcomer immigrant populations have

Theoretical Frameworks

LatCrit

I use LatCrit as a framework and an analytical tool to answer RQ #1 which aims to understand the experiences of students and parents in accessing learning environments that affirm students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identity, and also RQ #2 which aims to understand the experiences of education-based Latine leaders in the workplace when attempting to create a learning environment that affirms students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identity. LatCrit comes after Critical Legal Studies, Critical Race Theory (CRT), Feminist Legal Theory, Critical Race Feminism, Asian American legal scholarship and Queer Theory and emphasizes the Latine identities, lived experiences, and policy concerns while rejecting Latine exceptionalism and

persistently encouraging an intersectional discourse (Gonzalez et al., 2021; Valdes, 1997; Valdes & Bender, 2021). It reveals that oppression, racial depravity, and daily humiliation are all products of interconnected and mutually reinforcing oppressive institutions (Valdes & Bender, 2021). LatCrit is a path to create a more inclusive field and a collection of knowledge that illustrates the subtleties of racism and bigotry by examining the structural, institutional aspects of racial discrimination (Chávez-Moreno, 2016). In doing so, it amplifies the experiences and perspectives of People of Color to show a path toward a more equitable future (Guajardo, 2020). Within this framework, it is necessary to investigate the the multiple internal diversities within the larger Latine group, making it especially relevant for Southern Latines, who are a subgroup of Latines.

I used the two basic goals of LatCrit in my analysis and dissemination of findings. I used the first goal which is “to develop a critical, activist, and interdisciplinary discourse on law and policy toward [Latines]” to guide my analysis in both the formation of the codebook and the analytic process (Valdes & Bender, 2021, p. 1). LatCrit centers intersectionality and the ways race, class, gender, sexuality, and other forms of oppression relevant to Latines like immigration status, language, ethnicity, and culture manifest in the educational experiences of People of Color (Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). It is a guiding framework for challenging the idea that educational organizations are neutral systems that serve and support all students equally (Barajas & Ronnkvist, 2007; Blaisdell, 2016; Marx & Larson, 2012). This framework allowed me to better express the experiences of Latines through the use of a more specific lens that captures the unique types of oppression this group faces. I used the second goal which is “to foster both the development of coalitional theory and practice as well as the accessibility of this knowledge to agents of social and legal transformative change” to guide the dissemination of the

findings in an accessible way to participants, the North Carolina community, the organization I am partnered with, and those in positions of political power (Valdes & Bender, 2021, p. 1).

Community Cultural Wealth

I used Community Cultural Wealth (CCW), as a theoretical framework and analytic tool to answer RQ #3 which aims to understand how students, parents, and education leaders leverage their cultural wealth in creating affirming spaces for Southern Latine students in educational institutions. CCW is an asset-based framework that challenges traditional, deficit-based views in the experiences of Communities of Color (Yosso, 2005). Traditional interpretations of the experiences of people of color portray that these communities do not possess capital. CCW instead highlights that they have abundant cultural knowledge, skills, capacities, and networks that they leverage to navigate systems that oppress them (Acevedo & Solorzano, 2023; Orozco, 2008; Yosso, 2005). Though the framework has primarily been used to examine the experiences of Latine college students (Aragon, 2013; Holland, 2014; Fernandez et al., 2023; Luna & Martinez, 2013), it can also be applied to examine the experiences of marginalized parents (Gil & Johnson, 2021; Guzmán et al, 2021), administrators (Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2021), and teachers (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). CCW names six forms of capital that have been beneficial for evaluating the experiences of various racially marginalized communities: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant. Naming these different types of capital can empower communities to view their skills, experiences, and knowledge as valuable and contributions that promote the development of culturally responsive approaches that promote equity in education.

For this study, I drew primarily on resistant forms of capital leveraged by Southern Latines. Resistant capital, in particular, refers to the specific knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequity (Delgado Bernal, 1997; Freire, 1970; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). Resistant capital describes individuals consciously engaging, or teaching others to engage, in behaviors and maintain attitudes that oppose the status quo to transform oppressive structures. For example, Martin-Beltrán et al. (2018) demonstrate how individuals in students' lives such as teachers can encourage resistance among historically marginalized students to resist racist and xenophobic political climates and persist in the face of adversity. Resistant capital helps People of Color combat racial microaggressions or discrimination experienced in educational environments that can affect their sense of belonging by enabling them to organize and create counter spaces where they create their own sense of community (Alvarez, 2020; Sánchez-Connally, 2017; Yosso et al., 2009), which is of particular relevance as Southern Latines navigate institutions with origins rooted in racism and the exclusion of those who deviate from the white, American-born, cis-gender, heterosexual identity. As a theoretical framework, Yosso's (2005) notions of cultural capital provided me with a clear analytical roadmap for both the coding scheme and the analytical approach (Creswell, 2009). I used Yosso's definitions for the six forms of capital to intentionally identify useful codes that describe the use of the cultural capital of Southern Latines. In particular, I used the definition of resistant capital to create codes (e.g. resistance, inequity, discrimination, cultural authenticity, family) that reflected when parents and education professionals identified oppressive structures and when they consciously engaged or taught others to engage in acts of resistance. Then, in my analysis, I used the definition to explain how parents maintained attitudes of resistance, motivated their children to engage in resistance, and supported their children in persistence

through oppressive systems of education by providing academic support. Lastly, I used the definition to explain how SLEPs resist systems of oppression by leveraging their prior experiences and by collectively providing each other with the emotional support and mentorship they lack in an isolated environment.

Methods

Overall Research Approach

This study is a secondary data analysis that draws on existing qualitative data collected by an education-based nonprofit organization in North Carolina, LatinxEd³. Established in 2019, LatinxEd is a Latine-led organization that uplifts the educational experiences of Latine immigrant students and families. Over the past few years, the organization has collected data to refine its outreach goals. I draw on the data collected from three LatinxEd projects: Somos NC Listening Tour (SNLT), the Alamance Forward Listening Tour (AFLT), and the Education Leaders Issue Brief (ELIB). These three projects capture the experiences of U.S. Southern Latine parents and education professionals who support Southern Latine students who are largely underrepresented in the literature about Latine educational experiences.

LatinxEd's Organizational History

LatinxEd is a local non-profit that invests in Latine leadership to advance educational equity and opportunity in North Carolina. The conditions that created what is now LatinxEd started with a scholarship and mentorship program on the campus of a

³ All organizations, individuals, schools, and location names are pseudonyms.

university within the UNC System co-founded by two professors which was powered and led by hundreds of college volunteers. In 2018, LatinxEducation co-founders founded LatinxEducation out of a pressing need and desire to break down barriers to success for first-generation college students while expanding opportunities for immigrant families. The co-founders are first-generation college students and children of Latine immigrants transplanted in rural areas of the South. LatinxEducation is now led by a single Executive Director, a Peruvian-American, and a former classroom teacher. The organization aims to create culturally sustaining education systems that recognize, meet, and honor the diverse needs of Latinx immigrant families. Their approach to doing this is by offering targeted, multi-year support to Latine students and immigrant families striving for higher education and greater opportunity. The organization has four key areas of focus: Latine leadership to foster a new generation of Southern Latine leaders, Latine readiness to expand college opportunities for immigrant families, Latine awareness to advance community education and advocacy to strengthen schools and communities, and Latine voice to center the lived experiences of Latine youth. A leading part of their approach is the idea that those closest to the problem are closest to the solution, an approach I share that has fostered the idea for this dissertation over the past six years before I even considered applying to graduate school.

Researcher Positionality Statement

I, the author of this dissertation, am a Latina, cisgender, heterosexual woman, who is the daughter of Mexican immigrants. I am also a first-generation college and graduate student. I have worked with LatinxEducation since 2019. First, as a student in the co-founder's class and later as a policy and program specialist, a program assistant focusing on research and development,

since I departed from the state in 2020, I have maintained my relationship with the organization and intermittently offered my developing research expertise as a resource. In 2022, conversations about partnering in a research-practice partnership began between the Executive Director, Director of Programs, Partnerships Manager, Director of Advancement, Program and Curriculum Specialist, and myself. Upon multiple conversations over five months about mutual interests, we found existing data to match my interests, and they requested my consultation on a developing project that would compose part of the data selected for this dissertation, the ELIB. One of LatinxEd's staff members was assigned to support the development of the ELIB and expressed interest in developing analytic skills and thus supported data analysis for this dissertation. The staff member is a first-gen Latina with roots in Colombia and while working at LatinxEd, actively pursued her Master's degree in higher education.

I believe both my and the supporting staff member from LatinxEd's staff, identities and relationships to the organization strengthen the analysis of the data in two ways. First, as Latinas from the U.S. South, we have shared personal experiences being both Latinas, Southerners, and the intersectionality of being Southern Latinas in North Carolina. This shared identity with participants is a tool we leverage in the analysis of the data through shared linguistic and cultural understandings that help accurately interpret participant experiences and develop research questions that capture both barriers and the cultural wealth leveraged by individuals navigating educational institutions in the South and particularly, in North Carolina. Second, my pre-existing relationship with the organization has extensively fostered immense trust from the organization. This trust allowed me to seamlessly enter into weekly conversations with staff and engage in authentic, vulnerable conversations about

emerging themes in the analysis. These conversations with staff strengthened and validated my own interpretations of the data.

North Carolina Population

This study is situated in North Carolina, a state with a population of approximately 10 million people. According to the 2020 U.S. Census, 60% of North Carolina residents identified as White, 20% as Black or African American, 11% as Hispanic or Latinx, 3.9% as Multiracial, 3.3% as Asian, and 1% as American Indian (Tippett, 2021). In 2022 the White resident median household income was \$70,780, followed by \$45,007 for Black or African American residents, \$48,244 for Latines, \$57,527 for multi-racial, \$97,385 for Asians, and \$44,295 for American Indians (United States Census Bureau, 2021). Approximately 13.4% of the North Carolina population lives in poverty (United States Census Bureau, 2021). The state of education in North Carolina currently indicates that 11.6% of the population have not completed a high school education, 10% have an associate's degree, 24% have a bachelor's, and 12% have a graduate or professional degree (NC Educational Attainment Dashboard, 2020).

The approximately 1 million Latines in the state make up over one-third (35.2%) of the population under 18 (NALEO, 2020). Between 2010 and 2020, North Carolina's under-18 Latine population increased by 28.1% compared to the non-Latine population which decreased by 4.2%. Over 140,000 students are classified as English Language Learners (ELLs) (LatinxED, 2022). In public schools from 2012 to 2022, the number of Latine students has increased by 48% while the number of Black and White students has decreased by 1% and 8%, respectively (Facts & Figures Education in North Carolina, 2022). While Latine students

account for 20% of the K-12 student population, they only represent 8% of the University of North Carolina (UNC) System enrollment (Facts & Figures Education in North Carolina, 2022). This is the largest underrepresentation among population groups. In the system, Black students are underrepresented by 25% to 21%, Asian students are underrepresented by 4% to 5%, and white students are overrepresented by 45% to 55%.

Participants

One limitation of this study is that LatinxEd was not able to collect individual identifying information (e.g. race, class, educational attainment, etc.) for all of the individuals who participated. Because the organization recognized that participants' availability to engage in focus groups and interviews was limited due to work obligations and competing family responsibilities and their time sharing their stories was primarily volunteered, time with participants was spent prioritizing gathering their stories rather than gathering their identifying information. However, participants were encouraged to share their identities as they felt comfortable and relevant to their stories. For this study, I consider participants' identities as Latines in the U.S. South engaging in educational organizations as sufficient to include them in the sample and to answer the three research questions.

Data Sources

This study draws on data from three projects carried out by LatinxEd: the Somos NC Listening Tour (SNLT), the Alamance Forward Listening Tour (AFLT), and the Education Leaders Issue Brief (ELIB). All of the interviews and focus groups were conducted by staff at LatinxEd who have a Latine immigrant background. Staff met regularly after conducting

interviews and focus groups to reflect upon the interviews to discuss emerging themes from the interviews and share ideas for additional interview probes (McGrath et al., 2019; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Spanish protocols were used as needed and they were translated by native Spanish speakers to ensure that the questions were linguistically and culturally appropriate to increase the validity of the data (Peña, 2007). The breakdown of participants included in this study from each project is represented in Table 1. I draw on data from the SNLT and AFLT for the parent perspectives and for the education-based professional perspectives, I draw on data from the ELIB.

Table 1
Participants per project

	SNLT	AFLT	ELIB	Total Participants
Parents	20	27		47
Education-based Professionals			31	31
Total				78

ComunidadNC Project

To answer RQ#1 and #3, I draw on the perspectives of parents who participated in Somos NC Listening Tour, including four focus groups with 20 parents. The SNLT was carried out to understand how LatinxEd, and the community at large, may improve the educational outcomes for Latine students. The organization employed a snowball sampling technique to recruit participants in North Carolina’s eight geographic prosperity zones: the North Central, Northeast, Northwest, Piedmont Triad, South Central, Southeast, Southwest, and Western regions. The snowball sampling technique was employed to allow the organization to better access individuals from the local community. Latines represent a “hard to reach” population as they are often made

invisible through language barriers and through jobs that require long, odd working hours (Barrett, 2008; Watt, 2016); thus, snowball sampling allowed for the team to leverage personal connections that increased trust between the participant and the interviewers and increase the likelihood of follow through with participation. Participants did not receive stipends for their involvement; instead, they were motivated by the opportunity to have their voices heard and contribute to meaningful change for students in the community. LatinxED leveraged existing connections with universities, schools, organizations, and individuals and invited community members to volunteer and serve as liaisons between local communities. Volunteers had the opportunity to engage their community members in the project and participate in a focus group. Interviews and focus groups with parents were conducted in 2021 by LatinxED's team members in Spanish and English with parents from rural and urban areas. Semi-structured focus groups (protocols included in Appendix A) included questions about parents' experiences in public schools, what kind of resources parents need to take an active role in their child's education, the assets Latines bring to the community and how they can be better leveraged, and what kind of systemic changes they would like to see. The focus groups took place in person and via Zoom lasting between 40 and 80 minutes. All were audio recorded and transcribed. I use data from the SNLT to answer RQ#1 and#3 because the sample represents the perspectives of Latine parents engaging in the education ecosystem in geographically diverse areas of the state.

Alamance Forward Listening Tour

To triangulate the data from the SNLT and answer RQ#1 and#3, I expanded the sample to include the perspectives of 27 parents in the Alamance Forward Listening Tour (AFLT), which includes five semi-structured focus groups and two semi-structured interviews with

parents. The AFLT was carried out by LatinxEd in 2022 to a) identify barriers to high-quality education for underrepresented students in Alamance County, b) to learn from local leaders addressing the educational needs of the community, and c) build a plan to uplift the experiences of students and families to reform the education system to be more equitable. To do this, the organization provided community engagement awards to Alamance County community leaders or community-based organizations that serve underserved populations (e.g., 501c3 non-profit, faith-based organization, school, grassroots initiative, etc.). To apply to and receive an award, the individual or organizational entity had to reside or be employed in Alamance County. As part of their commitment, awardees were required to participate in outreach efforts to recruit participants and provide facilitation support for focus group discussions. Individuals who received an award were given \$1,000 to host one in-person event with at least 10 people. Focus groups took place in person and were conducted in Spanish and English by the awardee and a member of LatinxEd's staff. Focus groups lasted between 40 and 60 minutes and all were audio recorded and transcribed using Sonix.ai. The focus group protocol (see Appendix A) included questions about parents' experiences engaging with schools, challenges to engaging in their child's education, what kind of systemic changes they would like to see, and how organizations like LatinxEd can better support the community. I use data from the AFLT to answer RQ#1 and#3 because Alamance stands out as a county in North Carolina that has a larger percentage of Latines than the state average. Its demographic shift in the last decade represents the epitome of an area with a rapidly growing Latine immigrant population.

Education Leaders Issue Brief

To answer RQ #2 and #3, I draw on the perspectives of 31 education-based professionals who participated in the Education Leaders Issue Brief (ELIB) which includes six interviews and seven focus groups. The ELIB was carried out to understand how education-based professionals in North Carolina can be better recruited and maintained. Education-based professionals are broadly defined as individuals across sectors who engage in work that uplifts the educational experiences of Latine immigrant students and families in North Carolina. This definition expands beyond K-12 teachers and includes administrators, guidance counselors, staff in higher education, and education-based non-profit staff, all of whom are needed to support Latine youth across the educational pipeline. In May 2023, six preliminary interviews were conducted with community leaders, chosen by LatinxEd. The interview protocol is semi-structured and included in Appendix A. After completing preliminary interviews, I was hired as a consultant to conduct a preliminary thematic analysis, identify emerging themes, and narrow the focus of the study.

To answer LatinxEd's question of how education-based professionals in North Carolina can be better recruited and maintained, I, along with the staff at LatinxEd, decided to leverage LatinxEd's community and recruit participants from the cohort of one hundred 2023 LatinxEd Fellows. The LatinxEd fellowship, launched in 2021, is a one-year personal and professional development opportunity wherein Latine professionals receive coaching and workshops to strengthen their leadership skills and join a statewide network of Latine professionals. Applicants for the fellowship, regardless of their career, must be: at least 13 years old, Latino/a/x/e or Hispanic (with cultural roots connected to Latin America), residing in North Carolina, committed to LatinxEd's mission, vision, and values, actively working to serve and advance the Latinx community and education in North Carolina, and available to participate in all required fellowship new membership activities. U.S. citizenship or Spanish language ability

are not required.

In September 2023, LatinxEd and I invited the fellows to submit a preliminary survey asking about the conditions that best support their personal and professional well-being. We offered a \$10 Amazon or Target gift card in exchange for their participation. Within the survey, participants answered questions about their willingness to participate in a follow-up focus group in exchange for a \$40 Amazon or Target gift card. The survey had a 51% response rate and the focus groups had a 39% participation rate from participants who opted in. All individuals expressing interest in attending a focus group were invited to sign up for a 2-hour focus group session. Focus group participants consisted of nine workers in K-12 schools, eight at 4-year universities, seven at non-profit organizations, four in community colleges, two in business, and one in education policy. I revised LatinxEd's original protocols (Appendix A) to inquire about workforce preparation and conditions in five key areas: motivations for entering the field, reasons for persistence, challenges, supports leveraged, and reimagining the field of education. The protocol was semi-structured, providing a guide to ask relevant research questions while allowing flexibility to pursue relevant lines of inquiry. Most focus groups comprised 3-4 people, except for one with 6 participants, and were conducted in both English and Spanish. In-depth focus groups with education leaders occurred in October 2023 via Zoom, lasting between 120 and 130 minutes, and all sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed by Sonix.ai.

Data Analysis

For all three projects, all audio recordings were transcribed verbatim using Sonix.ai, an AI-powered transcription service, and then reviewed by native English and Spanish speakers to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. To accurately interpret the meanings of

counternarratives in particular, scholars emphasize the importance of applying cultural sensitivity by drawing on the capacity of individuals who have shared sociohistorical backgrounds with the participants (Bernal et al., 1995).

To both openly investigate the data and position emerging codes within broader discussions about Latine educational experiences, the support staff and I used both inductive and deductive qualitative analytic approaches (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To create the codebook, we used deductive coding based on prior literature (e.g., financial resources, teachers) and inductive coding (e.g., personal fulfillment, welcoming environment) by reading and memoing on the three different transcripts from each of the three projects I drew data from. Next, we reviewed the initial codebook to refine, combine, and remove codes (Saldaña, 2012). Appendix B includes the final codebook after coding transcripts from the SNLT, AFLT, and ELIB projects to further refine the codebook, ensure definitions of codes were clear, and applications of codes were congruent with one another. After five rounds of coding interview excerpts the codebook was finalized and includes five parent codes and 35 subcodes that cover themes that emerged from the interviews, focus groups, and weekly discussions.

For the analysis, the support staff and I conducted first and second-level analyses. For the first-level coding of the data, I trained the support staff member to use Dedoose, apply the codebook, and systematically code transcripts. We used Dedoose, a qualitative analysis software to apply codes to relevant excerpts. All transcripts were double-checked to ensure coding reliability. We generated memos to record nuanced findings if code applications could not accurately capture the data and when emerging themes within codes appeared. We met weekly to engage in discussions around emerging themes in the coding process to ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis and elicit additional perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

To further explore each code, we engaged in a second round of analysis where we further explored each subcode. After coding was completed, analytic memos were produced for subcodes to capture thematic patterns across the data. We wrote analytic memos to identify developing patterns in the data, combine them, and engage with existing theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Over the course of two months, we met once a week to critically evaluate emerging findings, contrast them with our field memos, look over contradictory data, and challenge each other's interpretations.

Findings

RQ #1: How do Southern Latine parents describe their experiences when participating in their child's education to advance their educational opportunities?

With such little socio-linguistic and cultural representation of Latines in U.S. Southern classrooms, Southern Latine parents play a critical role in building positive schooling attitudes and advocating for their children's academic success. Parent collaboration with teachers can build a necessary bridge between the home and school culture for Latine students (Grant & Ray, 2010). Parents can counter deficit perspectives that posit that Latine students have limited knowledge bases or lack the capital necessary for socio-economic mobility by communicating directly with teachers. They can achieve this by sharing insights into their child's strengths, interests, and aspirations thereby helping educators see beyond harmful stereotypes. Parents can also advocate for culturally responsive teaching practices that affirm their child's identity and foster a supportive learning environment (Trumbull et al., 2020). Additionally, the active involvement of parents in their children's schools and educational lives reinforces the importance of educational attainment. This is particularly impactful for Southern Latine students, who seldom see themselves reflected in white-collar career paths which are often safer, better-paid,

and have more regular working hours, but require post-secondary degrees (Lindsay & Hart, 2017; Monreal & Stutts, 2023). However, consistent with prior literature (Antony-Newman, 2019; Cross et al., 2019; McCarthy Foubert, 2023; Poza et al. 2014; Quiñones & Marquez Kiyama, 2014), I find evidence that parents face oppression in their attempts to involve themselves with schools and support their children’s educational opportunities. This oppression happens primarily through the lack of accessible language supports available to Spanish-speaking parents and discrimination from school staff. These findings underscore the importance of LatCrit Theory by encouraging intersectional discourse about the ways dominant groups in the U.S. South may limit Latine parents’ access to engaging in their children’s education on the basis of class, language, and immigration status. In limiting parents involvement in their children’s education, dominant groups exclude a valuable asset that Southern Latine students bring to their schooling and educational experiences, potentially hindering their opportunities for educational attainment and post-secondary success.

Limited Access to Language Supports

For Spanish-speaking, immigrant parents providing formal and informal support for their child’s education can be especially difficult given that they may face challenges with fully understanding and communicating with predominantly English-speaking staff members. Per the U.S. DOJ, DOE, and the EEOA of 1974, educational agencies must provide language support, including translations for written and oral communication, to ensure equitable access to instructional programs (EEOA, 1974; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, 1964; U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 2015). However, consistent with perspectives from the chair of the AAITE, one of the primary structural barriers Latine parents in this sample faced

to supporting their children's educational opportunities was the lack of access to language support. I found 34 instances where parents reported experiencing struggles accessing interpreters and translated content.

First, parents in this sample expressed that they faced barriers to accessing interpreters or bilingual staff with whom they could communicate. Whenever parents wanted to interact with teachers, administrators, or staff at the school, they first had to seek someone to bridge the language gap. Sandra explains the experience of her husband, Rigo, "Well, my husband often can't do as much at school because like before, sometimes he has gone to the school and there was no one who spoke Spanish so he had to come back home." While Rigo wanted to participate in their child's school activities, he could not because no one could understand and therefore engage him in his child's schooling activities. When the couple tried to contact the district for additional Spanish language support so Rigo could be more involved in his child's education, they did not receive a response from the district until much later. Sandra and Rigo were confused because they were under the impression that there *had* to be accessible Spanish interpreting support at each school. However, Rigo's experience represented that of many Spanish-speaking Latine families who, because of the lack of accessible interpreting supports, are excluded from participating in their child's education, limiting their opportunities to bridge the home and school divide that is beneficial for Latine students (Grant & Ray, 2010). Julissa shared this struggle of accessing interpreting supports, in her case written interpreting supports, when attempting to support her daughter, who is a senior in high school:

I know that next year there are many things that she is going to go through because she is going to be a senior and there are many events that happen, many things that she has to start doing and I kind of feel like this is it. The school she attends specifically like they never give supports for people who speak Spanish. I always have to come directly to the office and ask for myself because no one gives me information I understand.

Julissa shares that because the school her daughter attends does not send information in Spanish home, she constantly has to go to the office to seek someone to help her make sense of how she needs to support her daughter. However, parents express that even though they can request an interpreter, they are not always available meaningfully, a struggle consistently documented in the literature that captures the experiences of Spanish-speaking families engaging with schools (Bancroft, 2015; Menard-Warwick et al., 2023). For one, follow-ups on their requests for an interpreter take a long time. As one parent said, “One interpreter cannot fulfill such a great demand.” Another parent explained that he believes follow-ups to their interpreting requests take so long because there are very few interpreters and a very rapidly growing Latine population, explaining that there is perhaps only one interpreter per school which is particularly concerning at his son’s local school where 7 in every ten kids is Latine. Carmela, a mother expresses:

Ok so you go and put in a request to get an interpreter and then the interpreter tells you ‘I attend people in the order in which the request was received’... that is *torture* for people who don't know how to speak English, waiting to be paid attention to.

Carmela's choice to use the term “torture” highlights the profound sense of voice suppression experienced by Spanish-speaking parents, alluding to a long history of their exclusion from education environments and decisions (Ceballo et al., 2014; Giles, 2005; Grace & Gerdes, 2019; Grant & Ray, 2010; Langenkemp, 2019; Perreira et al., 2006; Trumbull et al., 2020). While an English-speaking parent can immediately advocate for their child by directly interacting with the staff member, to advocate for their child a Spanish-speaking parent might first have to use translation software to draft a message for the school requesting a meeting and an interpreter, wait for a response from the school, wait for a response from the interpreter, and then wait until there is an available time period that aligns with the parent’s working schedule, the staff’s schedule, *and* the interpreter’s schedule. For students who face bullying, problems with learning, and/or discrimination, every day that passes reduces the urgency staff may perceive to attend to it

by creating distance between when a problem occurs and when it is finally addressed. For parents, who desperately want to support their children's education and prepare them for post-secondary success, waiting to be recognized as active participants in their children's education can further strip parents of their agency and power, limiting the wealth of support parents are able to provide Latine students in their educational experiences (Menard-Warwick et al., 2023).

For parents living in rural areas, geographic distance and internet access can exacerbate barriers to accessing language support services. Increasingly, newcomers are settling in rural areas, farther from city hubs and surrounding suburbs. Nationally, the rate of growth in rural areas for foreign-born individuals is exceeding the rate of growth for native-born individuals (Mathema & Hermann, 2018). Thalia, a mother who lives in a rural NC county expressed that transportation is a big barrier to physically showing up at school:

One of our primary barriers is transportation... So transportation here, I'm talking about McDowell County. It's not so, so easy to have it. If you want to make an appointment, you must do so three days in advance. And you might imagine or think 'There's public transportation.' Yes in some areas and if you want to go and show up to school every day, I don't think transportation will take you.

As Thalia expresses, the struggle to show up at school for their children is amplified for low-income parents who might not be able to afford a car or for undocumented parents who do not have driver's licenses and risk deportation every time they get on the road (Cross et al., 2019; Enriquez, 2015). This is an especially terrifying reality for parents who live in rural areas that lack widespread public transportation systems where Latine immigrants in North Carolina are increasingly settling (Tippett, 2021). Even when parents want to support their children's education from their homes, by attending online webinars, or information sessions, they're not always able to because many rural households lack access to broadband. Though I found only five instances where parents mentioned struggling with internet connectivity, the NC Rural Center reports that nearly half (48%) of North Carolina children with no internet access live in a

rural county (NC Rural Center, 2023). One parent expressed, “But yes, I would like even brochures, to I don't know...to give information. There are many people who do not have access to the internet, so I don't know, a brochure or something would help.” Further, parents in suburban or urban areas are more regularly exposed to the internet, and those who live in rural areas may struggle more to attend to the increasing levels of technology schools are integrating into their children’s classwork and their family-school involvement approaches. For example, Carla a parent and a teacher explains:

Obviously navigating technology for our parents was very difficult. I remember that there were moments where I was on the phone with a baby, a second grade baby or a special needs child, even trying to tell them how they had to connect to their zoom class because their parents did not know.

The experiences of Southern Latine parents and students in rural areas brings forth the issue of spatial inequality where educators may assume that all families have equal access to digital literacy required to telecommute or transportation to physically access education establishments. However, for Southern Latine parents who face barriers related to language, class, race, and ethnicity, the rural/urban divide adds an added layer of complexity to the resources parents need to support their children’s education.

Discrimination

Consistent with prior literature which finds that Latine parents and students face discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, and language (Quiñones & Marquez Kiyama, 2014; Poza et al. 2014), I found evidence of parents having similar discriminatory and humiliating experiences. Among the 47 parents, I found 23 reported instances of discrimination including instances of staff perpetuating negative stereotypes and misconceptions about Latines. The

discrimination parents described stifled and undermined their efforts to support their children's educational experiences.

Elvia, a mother, described that she took it upon herself to learn English because she had an intuitive feeling that she was being disrespected and discriminated against. As her English proficiency developed, she realized that a staff member was, in fact, humiliating the Latine parents in front of others and perpetuating harmful stereotypes about their involvement. Elvia expressed:

And in fact, since I've learned English now, I told the principal this is happening, I told her [the staff member] does not respect the law, she makes fun when we talk amongst us Hispanics because she says that we are brawlers, that we all we do is troublemake, that we do nothing productive, that we are uneducated and talk over one another, but it is part of our culture, it's how we express ourselves with joy, we are lively and our engagement with one another is synonymous with the fact that we are happy to live together and that does not make us disrespectful people. I told him and he said 'It's good that you told me because not all people realize I pay this lady \$75,000 a year to do her job well and she wasn't doing it.'

Elvia's efforts were affirmed by leadership telling her that she did the right thing by reporting the individual, but in some cases, instances of discrimination were ignored altogether. For instance, Alondra, a Spanish-speaking mother to a 10th grader, explained having to overcome many language and discriminatory barriers to help her daughter to no avail. Alondra physically showed up at her daughter's school three different times and each time was turned away by the receptionist. Each time she left feeling defeated because she felt that she could not advocate or demand to see the principal because of the language barrier. In fact, because no interpreters were available to help her, she had to go to her daughter's elementary school, where she knew of a bilingual kindergarten teacher and asked her if she could please help her. The kindergarten teacher helped her finally arrange a meeting and translated the conversation so Alondra could explain her situation and ask how they could collaborate to help her daughter. In this conversation, the principal reassured her saying she would talk to her daughter and find a

solution. However, Alondra frustratingly says “She never talked to my daughter. They didn’t do anything. Nothing. I was mad, very mad that I had asked her for help and it’s all for nothing... that’s racism.” Elvia and Alondra’s experiences illustrate the struggle of many Black and Brown parents who are consistently ignored because of language, class, and immigration status when trying to advocate for their children while White, more affluent parents’ concerns about their children are prioritized, and addressed (McCarthy Foubert, 2023).

Similarly, Lola, a mother explains how eager she was to be involved in her child’s school and was constantly turned away:

The truth is, us being Hispanic many times we say ‘it’s not racism,’ but listen, they [staff] use the excuse that we don’t know the language to communicate with them. Later, when I learned English and I still tried to get involved, and even then, I had already learned English and I had all the information to contact people and get involved and they don’t want to engage with me in English or Spanish and I just don’t know, I don’t know if it’s because I’m Hispanic I don’t know, but it’s like they’re not interested in having me involved or including me to volunteer there at the school.

Lola rationalized the school turning away her involvement because she did not know the language and understood that this might pose a barrier to engaging at the school. She took this as a sign to work harder and learn English so that maybe *then* the school would let her participate in the PTA. However, even when she learned English Lola was met with the same resistance to her involvement. Lola’s story though, is symbolic because it represents a struggle immigrant parents face, being told their ability to achieve great opportunities is directly related to the amount of effort she puts in, ignoring that even when marginalized parents work hard to overcome barriers, they are still denied equal opportunity on the basis of race, ethnicity, immigration status and language (Del Cid, 2011).

Aside from experiencing explicit discrimination themselves, parents also expressed that their children experienced discrimination from staff members. Parents reported their children being called ethnic slurs such as “Don Juan,” being told by teachers that they “shouldn’t be

here,” or even “shouldn't you be hanging out with the drug traffickers out there in Mexico.” One parent, Leonor, expressed:

The teachers do nothing and it's become a problem. They say what they are going to do [to fix the problem], but they don't do it. Then you go with the director and the director says what he is going to do [to fix the problem] and they don't do it. All of our children tell us ‘Don't say anything, because it's worse.’ So if you say something or go with the teacher or go with the principal, you're worse off.

Leonor and others who saw their children face discrimination or experienced discrimination themselves, expressed disillusionment with teachers, administrators, and leaders. Parents felt helpless and doubtful that any of their experiences of being discriminated against would be acknowledged or addressed, especially seeing how many Black and Brown people have their concerns ignored, silenced, or forgotten. The disillusionment immigrant parents experience in anti-immigrant environments elicits particular attention as it is associated with elevated symptoms of depression and psychological distress, ultimately affecting parent-child-school interactions (Barajas-Gonzalez et al., 2022). This is even more relevant for undocumented parents who may hesitate to engage with school staff at all due to concerns about their legal status (Cross et al., 2019).

RQ #2: How do Southern Latine Education-based Professionals (SLEPs) describe their experiences in the workplace when attempting to create a learning environment that affirms Southern Latine students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identity?

As the Latine population of students in the South continues to grow, there is an increasing demand for Latine professionals in the field of education who possess a firsthand understanding of students' needs and how to harness their strengths. Consistently, SLEPs reported being one of few, if not the only, people with a marginalized background (e.g., race, ethnicity, language) at their organization and consequently, one of the few people who cared about creating a learning

environment that affirmed Latine students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identity. As of data from 2022 in North Carolina, Latine students make up only 8% of the UNC System enrollment (Facts & Figures Education in North Carolina, 2022), meaning that there is still a large underrepresentation of Latines in post-graduate professional spaces. Accordingly, the 31 SLEPs reported experiencing discrimination in their workplace or the field of education broadly, detailing 37 instances of both macro and microaggressions. In investigating the workplace experiences of SLEPs, I found that the lack of Latine representation in the workplace resulted in macro and microaggressions that hindered their ability to create a learning environment that affirms Southern Latine students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identity. The themes that emerged from our data analysis contribute to the ongoing discourse on LatCrit, particularly in illustrating the subtleties of discrimination against Latines in North Carolina based on ethnicity, culture, immigration status, and language (Chávez-Moreno, 2016; Rodriguez & Monreal, 2017; Rodriguez, 2023). The persistent barriers they experienced harmed their mental, emotional, and physical health and posed a threat to their ability to persist in the field of education and support the rapidly growing population of Latine students in the U.S. South.

Macroaggressions

Consistent with prior literature, I found that SLEPs consistently faced macroaggressions, which are overt, systemic, or institutional forms of discrimination or oppression (Camarrota 2014; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Vélez, 2011; Rodriguez & Monreal, 2017; Rodriguez, 2023). Unlike microaggressions, which are subtle and often unintentional, macroaggressions are typically more explicit and deliberate acts of discrimination or bias including hate speech, physical harm, discriminatory policies or practices, and other forms of systemic oppression or

marginalization. In alignment with the perspectives of LatCrit, these professionals recognize that the obstacles they face to creating a learning environment that affirms students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identity results from existing in spaces that were not created with them in mind (Gonzalez et al., 2021; Valdes, 1997; Valdes & Bender, 2021). The macroaggressions SLEPs faced consisted of 1) having to make up for a lack of resources invested by the state and 2) facing inequitable practices and policies.

First, I describe how SLEPs consistently have to make up for a lack of resources invested and allocated to support the creation of learning environments that affirm Southern Latine students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identity. SLEPs constantly found themselves doing jobs they were not being paid for that their white, English-speaking colleagues did not have to do. Dalia, a K-12 teacher, expressed extreme frustration that she had to play multiple roles. In addition to being a teacher to her students, she had to serve as an interpreter to families *and* explain to her colleagues how language or immigration status affects learning experiences. Dalia expressed that because she was doing this extra work that was not expected of her colleagues, in addition to teaching colleagues who have not been taught cultural competency, she found herself being overexerted. She felt that the overexertion threatened her ability to persist in education saying, "I'm not a superhero. I'm not Jesus. I cannot do it all. And I feel that I need that support to help my kids and not die in the process." While the field of education is an emotionally taxing field and prior literature documents how Latine teachers are largely underpaid and overworked, Latines in education are at an even greater risk for burning out because they are expected to serve as cultural liaisons, translators, or advocates for students and families, which can add to their workload (Okraski & Madison, 2020; Pizarro & Kohli, 2020). This can be especially true for SLEPs who are often one of the only, if not the only to do this work. Comparatively,

education-based professionals in places like California and New Mexico where Latine immigrants have traditionally settled may see more representation in their colleagues and thus the extra work Latine professionals are asked to engage in is distributed more evenly across more individuals and they do not have to carry the same load as those who may be the only Spanish-speaking or Latine individuals in a school.

SLEPs acknowledge that their exhaustion results from making up for a system that does not provide Latine students or families adequate resources to support their learning. In fact, SLEPs explicitly named this saying that they have to “carry this whole community because the system is not doing what they need to be doing” and that their extensive labor is “providing an excuse for [political] administrations not to put the support structures that are needed.”

Samantha, a principal, expresses that she’s highly aware of how the system perpetuates harm against Latines in education and she worries about the harm her Latine staff will face:

I could recruit 500 Latino teachers, but if we are putting them in spaces where they're at risk, where they are marginalized in their buildings, where the microaggressions are not micro, they are macro aggressions, like what are we setting them up for? Are we setting them up for success or are we setting them up for failure? And so I think that mean, again, like the recruitment, it's easy. But we are putting them in buildings where they're not safe, where they don't feel valued, where they are constantly fighting to swim upstream or fighting the majority culture where they don't feel safe to decorate their room as they wish or speak Spanish with other colleagues.

The quote by Samantha demonstrates how Latine teachers are being placed in environments where they face systemic barriers like not being paid for the multiple roles they hold *and/or* tolerating cultural insensitivity by colleagues. The evidence presented also suggests an important point, while special attention is paid to the recruitment of SLEPs in the South because of the increasing Latine student population, doing so without compensating the extra labor expected of them continues to perpetuate harm against the community.

SLEPs note that extreme lack of representation is extremely tiring not just because they are required to take on extra responsibilities, but because of the emotional labor that comes with being one of the few, if not the only person, fighting for educational equity for Latine students. This pressure, often called “the burden of representation” can manifest in various forms and consists of individuals feeling like they must represent the community in professional spaces or take on roles of mentorship within their communities (Hall, 1996). As Andres and Carina express:

I think other kind of challenges for me is the representation. It's not there's not a lot of Latinos at my workplace, I think I'm one of four. Um, and we don't have a large Latino student population [at this school] and I think I frequently feel like I have to kind of do it all for those students. Like, I lead the student union and sometimes I'm like, oh, I'm tired. I would like for someone else to kind of take this on... but at the end of the day, I'm like, I don't think anyone else would take it on, so I don't want to give it up because then they wouldn't have anyone. Um, and so that is hard, kind of being that person all the time for these students and not feeling like I could give up. Um, I think that's probably challenging. I think to the point where like, oh, I don't want to quit because then I have that guilt of like, oh, if I leave, then who would they have? -Andres

Let's say we're at a staff meeting or something, I'm always looking around the room and I see who's in the room. And nine times out of ten, I'm the only one in the room of my race and ethnicity. And I'm like, I got to stay.. I've got to stay, because there aren't many people like us especially, you know, at Arcadia [University], especially at Arcadia, like there are very few, especially Latinas, right? There are very few of us in the institution. I feel like I need to stay. There are more Latinas that we're hoping that can come to Arcadia and, and they need someone that is representative of them. Someone who understands, is relatable, can speak to them and just build that relationship with them, knows what they're going through, has been through the experience because then who else are they going to relate to? -Carina

Both Andres and Carina express that they feel like they cannot take a break, or step back because if they do, there is nobody else who will step up or be able to support the Latine students, leaving them feeling guilty. However, this guilt can pose a great threat to SLEPs ability to continue supporting Latine immigrant students in the long term. Throughout history, marginalized groups, including People of Color, have been systematically excluded from positions of power and

influence. As a result, when members of these groups achieve visibility or representation, they often become symbols for their entire community (Hall, 1996). The pressure placed on individuals from marginalized communities to serve as representatives, leaders, or advocates for their community's interests, progress, and well-being can make it hard for them to take the breaks needed to maintain the healthy work-life balance that is needed to persist in such an emotionally taxing field.

Second, I describe how SLEPs had to confront inequitable practice and policy to create learning environments that affirm Southern Latine students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identity. As LatCrit scholars argue, oppression against Latines is a product of the interconnected and mutually reinforcing oppressive institutions and the policies and practices they enforce (LatCrit, Valdes & Bender, 2021). Thus, part of SLEPs experiences was actively resisting these practices and policies, knowing they would face consequences for doing so. Carlos, who holds a position of leadership at his institution, expressed that he always felt like he had to justify *why* he was implementing practices that support Latine students and families when White colleagues were never questioned on practices that are proven to disadvantage People of Color. When he finally encountered a Latine colleague at a statewide conference, his colleague expressed that as a reality, he would struggle to counter oppressive practices when there is such little representation in the workplace. Carlos expressed:

And one of the things that he asked me was, "How many people are at your institution that also speak Spanish or are Hispanic?" And I said, "I'm the only one that really does this work." And he's like, "If you want me to be frank with you, it's going to be nearly impossible to get anything done and to get people to understand where you're coming from by yourself." And I'm consistently dealing with that. This is a challenge for me because it really can be such an isolating island where I work.

This example from Carlos illustrates how SLEPs, being one of the only people from a marginalized background in their organization, may find themselves receiving pushback from

colleagues and leadership when trying to implement new, critical approaches that support Latine students. His experience proves what other critical scholars have documented, without representation and support from others who understand their experiences, SLEPs may struggle to address systemic issues or advocate for change within the institution, ultimately hindering equity efforts to support Southern Latine students (Monreal 2022; Monreal & Stutts, 2023). Similarly, Catalina, a K-12 teacher, expressed that policy constraints around curriculum hindered her ability to support the Latine students she serves and said:

I feel like I have felt very like restricted into like, this is my lane and this is the lane I have to stay in. And sometimes that can get a little frustrating because it's like, I love this lane [education]. But I would also like to, you know, explore this lane [social justice]. And so one of the things that I'm kind of grappling with now is how do I find ways to kind of bring those passions together in sustainable ways.

Catalina, who describes herself as multi-passionate, wishes that she were able to bring topics of social justice that she knows would benefit her Latine students into the classroom. As a teacher, she expresses that she has strict curriculum guidelines and standardized tests that she must adhere to leaving limited flexibility to incorporate topics of social justice into her lesson plans. Moreover, teachers like Catalina face the threat of backlash if they dare to bring critical issues into the classroom. This situation mirrors broader challenges in education organizations where attempts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion practices and policies are merely performative, resulting in ineffective outcomes and leaving People of Color feeling frustrated and marginalized when they are not given the tools or support to do so, perpetuating a cycle of constraint and frustration. (Collins, 2011; Embrick, 2008; 2011; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998).

The tension between adhering to the status quo and going against policy was also one that Servando navigated as a college professor who teaches a class on social identities that covers the topics of race, sex, and sexual orientation. In 2023, the North Carolina Republican-controlled House passed a proposal restricting how educators can discuss critical race theory. Despite this

policy, he continued to teach the class as is. However, what he expressed he was not prepared for was receiving emails from journalists with uncomfortable questions insinuating that he, his job, image, livelihood, and well-being were targeted. Particularly in the South, discussions of social justice can be controversial and teachers fear pushback from parents, administrators, or community members who disagree with the inclusion of social justice topics in the curriculum (Monreal & Stutts, 2023). As such, SLEPs navigate tensions between adhering to the status quo and going against oppressive policies and practices to serve Latine students. These incongruences pose real physical threats to the livelihood and well-being of education-based professionals in the region. Which, in some cases did happen with seven instances of SLEPs reporting physical harms including being spit on by community members and being harassed. These distressing incidents underscore the significant risks that educators like SLEPs face when advocating for equitable education. The experiences of Carlos, Catalina, and Servando highlight how SLEPs grapple with countering oppressive practices and policies as they strive to create inclusive learning environments that affirm the racial, linguistic, and cultural identities of Latine students. These tensions between adherence to the status quo and resistance against oppressive structures reflect the complex realities faced by SLEPs in navigating their professional roles and advocating for social justice in education which often comes at great personal risk and sacrifice. Moreover, the organizational actions and attitudes that perpetuate these tensions can have lasting effects on the health, career trajectories, and political power of people of color (Roberts, 2011; Sewell, 2016; Wilson, 1996). This confluence of systemic challenges not only jeopardizes the well-being of educators but also perpetuates broader inequities within educational systems, ultimately undermining efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion for Southern Latine students.

Microaggressions

Consistent with prior literature, I found that SLEPs consistently faced microaggressions, which are subtle, often unintentional verbal or behavioral slights or insults that communicate derogatory or negative messages to individuals based on their marginalized identities (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2010; Monreal, 2022; Orelus, 2020; Spencer, 2017; Champion & Wilson-Jones, 2023; DeSante, 2013). The microaggressions against SLEPs took the form of comments or behaviors that conveyed stereotypes, assumptions, or biases about their ethnicity, culture, and language. These microaggressions harmed their health and hindered their opportunities for advancement and recognition.

In communicating their histories, SLEPs described often facing microaggressions in their journeys persisting through the educational pipeline (Dollarhide et al., 2013; Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2010; Monreal, 2022; Orelus, 2020), affecting their ability to graduate and access a professional career. However, even when they were able to secure a job also despite the systemic barriers they faced, the microaggressions continued to impact their sense of belonging and opportunities for career advancement (Spencer, 2017). SLEPs described having to constantly fight against the preconceived notions their colleagues held against Latines and advocate that they are equally capable. Gael describes:

A lot of times administrators, policymakers, and other educators who are not persons of color, in their minds, educators of color are confined to certain spaces and other spaces where they should not be. They don't think of us as being capable of leading the department. They don't think of us as being innovative in our pedagogy, or in our approaches. And that's taxing on teachers of color, to be doing more work than everybody else even to be considered as professional. When I was in the classroom I had to go above and beyond just to be considered on par with everybody else in the eyes of certain folks. I worked my behind off. You know, I was volunteering for clubs and started clubs and doing this and that, but I never got considered for the instructional lead

positions. Nobody asked me to be the department chair. Nobody even recognized half of the stuff that I was doing.

While macroaggressions are often more visible, microaggressions may be subtle, everyday actions that communicate derogatory or negative messages, are often unintentional, and may not be recognized as harmful by the perpetrator. Gael's experiences illustrate microinvalidation, a form of microaggressions, where he worked twice as hard and was invalidated by only being given half the recognition (Dalton & Villagran, 2018; Turaga, 2020). His leadership's lack of acknowledgment for the extra work he was doing communicated messaging of unappreciation and lack of acknowledgment for his capacity as a Person of Color to lead staff, a common phenomenon for staff of color leading them to question themselves, their teaching ability, and their career choices (Champion & Wilson-Jones, 2023). Similarly, Rosa, a teacher describes a similar experience:

Whenever I said something in meetings, something that is important for Hispanic students, they would look at me like, 'okay, yeah, let's move on to the next point.' No feedback, no nothing. And I have to let the others, my coworkers, know that I AM a teacher. I've come from another country, I went to college and got my degree, I have my license, I have experience, and I CAN bring something powerful to the table... And that is something I've had to, you know, fight for, like, 'hey, I AM a teacher.'

Despite being equally qualified as their White colleagues, Gael and Rosa were ignored whenever they tried to make meaningful contributions. In Rosa's quote not only did she express being undermined as a professional, but how this discrimination came about because she was actively advocating to implement supports for Latine students. In line with the prior literature, participants described that one of the tensions they navigate in doing radical work to better serve Latine students is knowing that they must go against established rules and policies recognizing that they are entangled in larger ideologies that include the racist policy and politics (Rodriguez, 2021). SLEPs recognize that their resistance against the system has implications for their everyday interactions in their professional lives including receiving microaggressions such as

being perceived as unprofessional by their White colleagues. For example, Manuel, a teacher describes an instance where he knew a school discipline policy was harming children of color and instead chose not to enforce it:

What we try to work on through teaching in color is recognizing that when the system is stacked against black and brown kids, if you are an educator and you're standing up for those kids, then you're standing against the system, Right? And there are consequences to that, professional consequences. I remember there was a point in my career where, you know, I'm trying to advocate for my students and we had a very rigid school discipline policy where if kids weren't wearing their shirt tucked in, I was supposed to send them to the office to get points taken away or something, you know. But I'm like.. I'm supposed to be educating this kid? If you're here at my room, if your shirt is on top, that doesn't mean your brain is not working, right? That does not mean your mind is not prepared to learn. Come on in and have a seat. In a culture that's trying to enforce these punitive rules. As an educator, if I'm the one, the only one on the team who's not following that strict dress code, you know, and sending students downstairs, then I'm looked at as the weak link. Professionally, there's consequences to that. Maybe I don't get promoted to department chair. Maybe I'm not the one that they're looking at when they're looking for someone to become a team lead or an instructional coach.

In Manuel's story as a teacher, he identified a policy as harmful to students of color and recognized that not enforcing it might compromise his professional perception in the eyes of his White colleagues. Nonetheless, he chose not to actively enforce the policy and recognized that this would ultimately negatively affect his opportunities for professional advancement. While prior literature documents the microaggressions Latine teachers face (Champion & Wilson-Jones, 2023), even as Latines progress in their careers to take positions of leadership or authority, the microaggressions continue (Spencer, 2017). Samantha, a principal describes making active efforts to recruit Latine staff so her Latine students see more representation in the classroom. However, in her effort to advocate for equity and culturally responsive practices for the Latine students at her school, she faced microaggressions from the White staff she supervises. She described that she had recently been told "she only likes the Mexicans," despite being the only Mexican teacher amongst the Central American staff at the school which insulted not just her,

but the diverse histories and cultures of her staff and perpetuating a harmful perspective of the Latine identity as a monolith. She continued to express:

Two of my front office staff are bilingual, along with three other teaching staff that speak Spanish. So there are seven of us in this building. And yes, when we're sitting and drinking coffee or having lunch in the teacher's lounge, we are going to speak Spanish together. And I mean... the the daggers, the side eyes, and the criticism [from White staff] secretively and not so secretively like... I'm the principal here?! Like my name is on the on the marquee outside, are you kidding me? Just to be treated like it doesn't matter.

Samantha, being in a leadership position, still fights preconceived notions about who Latines are and feels like she actively has to show her staff that she is deserving of the respect she has earned to be in a leadership position. Her struggle as an administrator is not all that different from the struggles Latine teachers face, which brings special attention to the shared racialized experiences education-based professionals in the South share regardless of their role or authority within an organization. Samantha expressed concern that Latines are harmed if they do not receive opportunities for professional advancement and also harmed if they do.

In some cases, SLEPs expressed that the microaggressions did result in stalled career advancement. Laura, an assistant principal and immigrant described how she was often called “unapproachable” and “aloof” because of assumptions people made because she spoke with an accent despite her great efforts to bring more opportunities for Latine students in her school. She describes:

I continue to be, doubted, second-guessed, and discriminated against. I became a school administrator and did not make it past assistant principal. I did not get promoted. People did not find it that I could be the person representing a school, even though the people I competed against were people that were not bilingual [attempting to lead] in bilingual schools. They were not representatives of the majority community in any way, [they were] monolingual, White. In the 14 years that I've been an administrator, I have been the only person that I've known like me. And as a result, I've encountered all kinds of discrimination, and violence against me. There's been not only microaggressions but macroaggressions too.

Laura's experience of being passed over for a promotion to lead a bilingual school, which is largely comprised of immigrants like her, is consistent with prior literature which shows that Professionals of Color work twice as hard, while often times White professionals are praised and rewarded for less effort (DeSante, 2013). Many young Latines are under the impression that once they receive their degree and work hard at their jobs, they will gain access to respect and recognition from colleagues. However, as shown in these stories, this is far from reality. Because there is no diverse staff or investment in professional development to train staff on cultural competence, SLEPs are not only expected to carry the weight of systemic underinvestment but face punishment in the form of microaggressions and microinvalidations when they do so.

RQ #3: How do Southern Latine parents and education-based professionals leverage their resistant cultural wealth to persist in their journey to advance educational opportunities for Southern Latine students?

While parents and SLEPs faced many barriers to creating environments that affirm Southern Latine students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identity and supporting their educational opportunities, they also leveraged their resistant cultural wealth to persist in their journeys. When engaging resistant capital, individuals consciously engage, or teach others to engage, in behaviors and maintain attitudes that oppose the status quo, which is necessary to resist racist and xenophobic political climates and persist in the face of adversity (Martin-Beltrán et al., 2018; Yosso, 2005). I found that parents demonstrated resistant capital 1) in their attitudes, and 2) by actively motivating their children to engage in resistance and push against systems of oppression. SLEPs built resistance by 1) reflecting on their lived experiences in the community and 2) finding community that provided the emotional support and mentorship they lacked in

predominately white spaces. While previous studies have used the CCW framework to examine the experiences of the Latine community, these findings shed light on the importance of resistant capital in spaces like the U.S. South. Particularly how resistant capital plays a role in the survival and continued growth of the Latine population in areas with rapidly growing immigrant populations and few resources supporting them.

Parental Resistant Capital

Attitudes of Resistance

First, I describe how parents demonstrated resistant capital in their attitudes and actively motivated their children to push against systems of oppression. Across 47 parents, I found 25 instances where parents demonstrated attitudes of resistance. Despite recognizing systemic barriers impeding educational advancement for Southern Latine students, parents remain steadfast in their commitment to overcoming these obstacles, using systemic barriers as a motivating force to persist. One immigrant mother, Lola, who had been consistently turned away from participating in the parent-teacher associations (PTA), even after learning English, voiced:

Americans do not include us... they will never consider us to be part of things. But this [idea] can serve as something else. If you have not been invited, or there is not a group for you, because they only communicate in English or whatever reason, you can form your own group too.

Lola demonstrates that she is keenly aware that she, or people like her, who are marginalized by race, ethnicity, culture, language, and immigration status, might never gain acceptance into the groups created by those who marginalize them. Her story mirrors the experiences of Latino parents in Muro's (2024) study where parents are directly and indirectly turned away from participating in key school-home connection organizations like the PTA. However, rather than letting this stop their efforts to support their children, Lola suggests that parents make their own

groups where they can unite and cater to the interests of the Spanish-speaking community. For parents like Lola who are marginalized by race, ethnicity, culture, language, and immigration status maintaining *attitudes* of resistance is important because it enables them to create mindsets that withstand adversity and engage in *acts* of resistance (Yosso et al., 2009; Sánchez-Connally, 2017). One mother, Irma, illustrated the phenomena stating:

As a parent, I would like to go beyond conversation describing racism, to talk about solutions and try to fix them [racism and discrimination]. I know many parents work a lot or feel they can't because there's not enough information in Spanish but we have the power to change something.

Irma expresses her desire to move beyond mere conversations about racism and actively seek solutions to address it. While she acknowledges challenges such as time constraints and language barriers, underscoring the complexities faced by parents in navigating issues of social justice, she emphasizes the inherent power within parents to instigate change, regardless of these obstacles. Her perspective aligns with a critical tenet of CCW, empowering people of color to recognize their abundant power to organize and create counter spaces where they create their own sense of community (Sánchez-Connally, 2017; Yosso et al., 2009).

Similarly, Guadalupe, a mother, described how these attitudes of resistance manifest in acts of resistance in advocating for educational opportunities for her two daughters, ages 22 and 19, who both aspire to attend college. When her oldest daughter was applying for financial aid, she faced many obstacles including being confused by the application, being told she would not receive financial aid because she comes from a mixed-status family, and ultimately being denied financial aid. However, because the family was persistent and demanded that teachers and staff help her find financial assistance, they managed to obtain financial aid for their oldest daughter enabling her to attend college. Now in the process of obtaining aid for their younger daughter, Guadalupe says, “But what I would like parents like me to keep insisting on is getting their child

the support they need, because now I understand why kids don't go to school and prefer to work than go to university.” Guadalupe describes that she hopes other parents will also express resistance when they are denied opportunities especially because, in this process, seeing her daughter become frustrated by all the obstacles, she realized why many students who face barriers like her daughter are deterred from pursuing higher education. Guadalupe’s statement is consistent with prior literature that emphasizes the importance of resistant capital, showing that the barriers students and families experience are contributing factors to dropping out and decreased wages over time (NCDPI, 2022; Chetty, 2020; Chetty, 2011). Thus, her story underscores the transformative potential of parents who maintain attitudes of resistance and demand more support in pursuing equitable educational opportunities for Southern Latine students.

While parents recognize the power of individual resistance, they also recognize that collective action is necessary to make systemic change. As Estela states:

We should start forming groups in schools for Hispanics to talk about this whole problem [of racism] and connect more with others on ideas and above all so that parents can snowball off each other and talk, perhaps some parents have seen things at school that others had no idea about that one could do.

Estela embodies a call to action as parents strive to translate their thoughts and concerns about racism into tangible initiatives within school communities. Proposing the establishment of groups dedicated to addressing racism among Latines in schools reflects a proactive approach to transforming attitudes into meaningful change. By advocating for open dialogue and connection among parents, she underscores the urgency of collective action in confronting systemic issues of discrimination. Alicia, a Spanish-speaking immigrant mother exclaims why she feels it is so important to physically show up and express resistance at schools:

Not everyone can be involved, many mothers because they work a lot or because they have other obligations to take their children to the doctor... and that is why not much

change is made in the schools... as you said a little while ago, we must all raise our voices together. [To schools] one person is basically nobody, they won't want to listen to us, but what about when we unite? As the saying goes, "together, we're never defeated.." Because if we don't all show up, there will never be a change.

Alicia's quote aligns with the perspectives of LatCrit scholars in that she acknowledges the ways systems further marginalize Latine parents of color and exclude them from participating in their children's educational experiences (Gonzalez et al., 2021; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001; Valdes, 1997; Valdes & Bender, 2021). She emphasizes that for these reasons it is especially important for the parents who are able, to show up. Yazmin, a Spanish-speaking mother agrees and says, "These are opportunities for parents who have not had much connection with the system to begin to feel comfortable and meet people and have a space, a space that honors them and where they feel comfortable." The notion of parents collaborating and learning from one another's experiences and observations signifies a pivotal step towards mobilization, not only in countering deficit beliefs from staff about how much parents care about their child's education but by encouraging the sharing of insights to fuel advocacy efforts and maximizing the community's collective cultural wealth.

Motivating Children to Engage in Resistance

In addition to organizing themselves, parents also encouraged students to congregate amongst themselves and collectively resist when they faced structural inequity. Parents emphasized the power of community and collective action because they recognized that the structural issues they face are far too great for one student, parent, or family to combat alone. For example, Irma, an immigrant mother described that when she learned her daughter's teacher was pinning a confederate flag, a symbol of segregation and white supremacy, in the classroom she encouraged the children to collectively express their nonconformity:

Irma: And that bothered me because it was like giving [racist] signaling to the children, you understand what I mean? And I didn't like it and I did report it to the principal because I didn't like it and I also reported other teachers.

Interviewer: Did they do anything about it?

Irma: They fired him. And there was another teacher who tried to make his class very entertaining or very controversial and always gave classes on racist topics. I told my daughter, "Hispanics, talk among yourselves to try to congregate, to get support from the other Hispanic parents, to try to get them to actually investigate the situation because that is not right." And we actually did it and the teacher was discharged. But it bothers me how the educational system works, often rotten teachers are let go, but they only move and go to another school.

Guadalupe's example illustrates how parents encouraged students to build solidarity and advocate for change. She described how the students and parents organized to get a teacher investigated and ultimately dismissed because they were bringing racist comments and items into the classroom under the guise of making a class "entertaining or controversial." She expresses that while her local community was able to engage in collective action to resist the discrimination she dislikes that without more collective action and structural changes, this teacher will probably be hired elsewhere and other kids will experience the same racism. Guadalupe's sentiment while disappointing, is quite true as racism is an inherent attribute of most institutions that is reinforced through practice and policy (Kendi, 2016; Massey & Denton, 1993). While racist teachers may be dismissed, they may be asked to resign rather than be explicitly fired which enables them to obtain jobs in nearby schools or districts where they can continue to perpetuate harmful narratives and practices on marginalized students. Another parent, Isabel, experienced a similar situation where her daughter was experiencing microaggressions:

Never in your life do I want you to let a teacher say something to you that makes you feel uncomfortable, uneasy or to say anything racist to you and then tell you that it's a joke. It's not a joke. Respect is earned. If your teacher told you something and in that moment you don't feel comfortable to, speak up. Say 'You know, what you're doing in front of my classmates, I don't like it because it sounds racist' or 'I don't like how you're saying it or what you are doing.' I don't care if you get in trouble, respect is earned. If they make them feel bad because they have power over a student because they are a teacher, why wouldn't you say something? That's what I tell my daughter. And I teach her that the person who does the harm is just as responsible for the damage, as the person who is a bystander and does nothing.

Isabel recognized that the power dynamics in schools between a teacher or administrator and a student might scare her daughter from outwardly expressing resistance in situations of injustice, she empowered her daughter to speak up whenever she felt uncomfortable, giving her permission to get in trouble if it meant standing up for what was right. Another parent, Salud, expresses that racism and discrimination can be hard for young children to really grasp saying:

Sometimes racism at school is something that affects our children a lot, sometimes they don't know how to deal with it, and it's dependent on each family to explain to them the reality of the situation so that each family can defend themselves and find a solution.

Salud's example emphasizes the role of parents in identifying discrimination and fighting against it, especially when children are young and may lack the knowledge or vocabulary to communicate injustices. This is consistent with prior literature on new immigrants, which underscores parents' important role in helping their children overcome new challenges, find new strengths, overcome fears of the unknown, and encounter and confront racism (Perreira et al., 2006). These examples from Salud and Isabel also speak to the critical role parents play in the lives of Southern Latine students in particular, supporting them in overcoming extreme cultural mismatches between home and school cultures that can harm their self-esteem, sense of belonging, and self-efficacy necessary to excel academically (Mellom et al., 2018).

Parents recognize that expressing resistance to figures of authority can be daunting for children, so they serve, or offer to serve, as mediators in confronting discrimination. Valentina,

an immigrant mother, described an instance where she was teaching her son how to confront racism from a teacher:

No, maybe you don't say anything at the moment, I tell him if you don't... tell *me*... *tell me* and I'll see who I talk to, what I do... there are parents who have to work and they really aren't given the opportunity to be present at school, and there are teachers who look for those most vulnerable children to dump on them all the stress that perhaps they accumulate from dealing with all the other kids. And I understand their stress, but that's what parents are for and there are parents who don't have the confidence to speak up. So they stay silent and [students] live that martyrdom every day at school.

Parents play a pivotal role in teaching their children how to engage in acts of resistance while navigating complex power dynamics. Valentina acknowledges the daunting nature of resisting figures of authority and offers herself as a mediator to advocate for her son's well-being. She emphasizes the importance of empowerment, reassuring her son that she stands ready to address any injustices he may face at school. Valentina's words reflect a broader pattern of parental support and advocacy, particularly for families who may face barriers to engaging directly with educational institutions due to work commitments or language barriers (Ceballo et al., 2014; Giles, 2005; Grace & Gerdes, 2019; Grant & Ray, 2010; Langenkemp, 2019; Perreira et al., 2006; Trumbull et al., 2020). In recognizing the challenges faced by children and parents in educational organizations, these parents underscore the vital role of parents in fostering resistant capital through their resilience and empowerment in systemic discrimination (Yosso, 2005). Through their actions and words, they exemplify how parents serve as agents of resistance, nurturing their children's ability to confront injustice while navigating the complexities of authority and power dynamics in society.

SLEP Resistant Capital

Prior Experiences as a Catalyst for Resistance

Second, I describe how SLEPs built resistance by reflecting on their prior experiences in the community using them as catalysts for resistance. SLEPs grapple with a formidable barrier to their persistence in the education ecosystem: the stark absence of representation within their field. Confronted with this reality, I found 50 instances where SLEPs described that building representation was a motivating factor for entering and/or persisting in the field of education helping them combat the micro and macroaggressions they faced. For example, Elena, who runs an education-based non-profit that provides resources for education equity in her rural hometown describes:

I'm here for my community. No, it's not the money.. the salary is not the highest. I've been offered jobs where I get paid more but the reason I'm here is because I have such a close connection to the community, to the parents, to the students. Because I see myself when I look at them. I remember when I was 15 years old and I was trying to navigate the whole system and it breaks my heart when I find out that there are students here still who are U.S. citizens, they qualify for financial aid, but they don't fill it out because they're afraid. The parents are afraid because the parents kind of get stuck and let themselves fall. So for me, the reason that I'm still in this job, the reason that I'm here specifically in Porter, is because of the connection, because of the community, because of the family and because of the need.

Elena, who previously expressed that she is faced with the burden of representation often working into the night hours of 9 or 10 pm, also describes that her *fuerza*, or strength, comes from the community. Seeing the impact that she is able to have on students just like her in her hometown where she too struggled to access higher education is the reason she continues to work in education despite the systemic barriers she faces to supporting Southern Latine youth. Her experience aligns with literature on resistant capital that emphasizes how empowering reflecting on and sharing stories of lived experiences are for Latines who are often isolated or disempowered from expressing their cultural identity proudly (Alvarez, 2020). Similarly, Emilia who expressed that her experiences in North Carolina made her constantly feel like she did not belong expressed:

When I finally made the decision [to teach] I think that really, I knew pay was going to be an issue, and especially here in North Carolina and I almost was willing to sacrifice that because for me, the value of like community and family and connection was so much more important. And it felt like something that I just I knew the impact of what that void had done for me. And so I was just so committed to helping to like whatever I can do to help other students *not* feel what I felt, I want to be a part of that. So I was really I think I kind of like disregarded the pay for that for like the bottom line, the students, their families being able to support them.

Emilia's reflections on her journey in North Carolina express the pervasive sense of alienation and disconnection she encountered. However, she emphasizes the sacrifice she was willing to make in pursuit of fostering a supportive and inclusive educational environment for Southern Latine students. Despite the prevailing disparities in pay, Emilia prioritizes the intrinsic value of community. Her commitment to addressing the void she once felt drives her determination to empower students and their families, ensuring they do not endure the same struggles she faced. Consistent with prior literature, Elena and Emilia's narratives exemplify the transformative power of leveraging personal experiences to fuel resistant capital (Alvarez, 2020; Monreal, 2022), where the collective strength and determination of SLEPs serve as catalysts for systemic change within educational landscapes. SLEPs experiential knowledge and skills fostered through oppositional behavior in their own journeys enable them to continue challenging inequity in pursuit of better education experiences and opportunities for Southern Latine students (Delgado Bernal, 1997; Freire, 1970; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001).

Community Support Enabling Resistance

Because SLEPs struggled so much to find community growing up and in the workplace, they heavily emphasized how transformational the moments when they found community were. These supports included emotional support and mentorship. As previously described, emotional taxation is one of the burdens that comes with being one of the few, if not the only SLEPs

attempting to create a learning environment that affirms Southern Latine students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identity. When SLEPs found community, they described finally finding emotional support and being able to share stories of struggle, collectively challenge prevailing norms, policies, and practices, and reducing the isolation they felt. For example, Gabriela describes:

I have a colleague who has an office next door to me. His focus is more on our black students and their experiences on campus and so we do sort of similar work in the sense of being in the same space and the work that we're doing in our space and our organization on campus. So having that support, even though it's not like to the T as if he were undocumented, it's not like that. He works with his own caseload, but when it comes to initiatives and things that we're trying to work on, the academics and financial aspect of supporting our students, we can definitely lean on each other. So just being able to have someone right next door to me that sometimes will, like, meet weekly. So we'll catch up on what's going on, what are we thinking? What are we trying to plan event wise, program wise? Um, and so that's just been my support in this isolated island that I deal with.

Gabriela highlights the vital role of community support in navigating the challenges of working in education, particularly for Southern Latines who seldom have anyone they can relate to. She highlights the significance of having colleagues, despite focusing on different aspects of student support, who have a shared goal of advancing equity for students. The collaborations and discussions not only provide a space for catching up on work-related matters but also serve as a source of solidarity in the face of isolation. Similarly, Carina describes,

Creating a network and a safe space for us to talk about the realities of what we experience, because a lot of us are the only... I've spent my entire career, the only Latina, the only person that speaks Spanish, you know, in one case, I was the only person of color in the entire building, apart from, like, the custodian. Um, and so just doing that and creating these affinity groups or creating networks of people where they do feel like they can unburden and talk with people who are experiencing some of the same things that they're experiencing. And then through that, there is kind of like enveloped mentorship, both formal and informal professional development.

Carina encapsulates the profound impact of community support on the experiences of Southern Latines in the educational ecosystem. She reflects on the isolation and challenges she faced

throughout her career as the only Latine or Spanish speaker in her professional environments. In her story, she underscores the transformative power of creating networks and safe spaces where individuals can share their realities and find solace in collective understanding (Alvarez, 2020; Sánchez-Connally, 2017; Yosso et al., 2009). These affinity groups and networks not only serve as avenues for unburdening oneself but also foster enveloped mentorship opportunities, both formal and informal, within the community enabling individuals to navigate the complexities of their work with a sense of solidarity and empowerment. In the context of LatCrit, these narratives highlight the pervasive emotional taxation experienced by Southern Latines in their efforts to create inclusive learning environments that affirm students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identities. However, the moments of connection and support described by Carina and Gabriela reflect the resistant capital leveraged against systemic macroaggressions.

In SLEPs journeys, finding community not only ushered in a newfound sense of belonging but also facilitated a deeper connection to meaningful mentorship opportunities. As they traversed the challenges of the educational landscape, SLEPs found solace and professional guidance from mentors who understood the intricacies of their experiences, navigating similar micro and macroaggressions in the workplace. For example, Irene describes,

I've had some really, really great mentors growing up that are teachers that are actually in the field and who gratefully have, like, kept it really, really real with me and had like really honest conversations and who I could always go to and share some of my frustrations and know that they understood because they had been through it... even though it still does feel isolating, I still know, like I have a peer that I could lean on... and being a part of the [LatinxED] fellowship has been like, amazing. I also have joined a few like online communities, like We All Grow Latina and they really focus on like providing topics and discussions on things that are relevant and pertinent to those of us who are in this space.

Irene's experience underscores the invaluable role Latine mentors play in guiding and supporting individuals through their journey. She reflects on the profound impact of having mentors who not only excel in their respective fields but also prioritize authenticity and candid dialogue. Their

candid dialogue helps SLEPs mentally prepare for the way institutions reinforce racism through practice and policy (Kendi, 2016; Massey & Denton, 1993). Similarly, Sam, a first-gen gay Latine male who attended a PWI and grew up in a small, rural conservative town describes that when he finally found mentorship from Latines at his university's Latine center he felt "so empowered, I felt validated, I felt heard, I felt seen.. I was able to get a lot of exposure to what the reality of education is behind the scenes" and he realized "higher ed is not the prettiest thing in the world." These mentors serve as beacons of wisdom, offering a safe space for sharing frustrations and navigating challenges unique to the Latine experience.

Despite the persistent sense of isolation, the presence of supportive mentors and community networks, such as the Latine fellowship and online platforms like We All Grow Latina, serve as sources of solidarity and empowerment. This is consistent with prior literature on SLEPs that finds that while navigating and negotiating their relationship to the policy, peers, and existing norms in silos is difficult (Monreal and Stutts, 2023), SLEPs have created loving bonds with immediate family, trusted friends, and community members to help them persist (Monreal, 2022). While SLEPs described the value of mentorship, they also expressed needing more of it especially as they continue to climb the leadership ladder and see less representation at higher levels of power that Latines are only beginning to penetrate. This resonates deeply with LatCrit because, despite the transformative potential of mentorship, there remains a need for increased support and representation for Latines in leadership positions. Reflections on the invaluable role of mentors highlight how these relationships serve as a form of resistant capital, providing guidance and support grounded in shared experiences of adversity and marginalization.

Discussion

In investigating the experiences of Southern Latine parents' participation in their child's education, I find that Southern Latine parents' attempts to provide both formal and informal forms of support to their children are stifled and undermined by the lack of language support accessibility and discriminatory experiences with school staff. These findings emphasize the importance of examining parent support through a critical lens, particularly through the use of the LatCrit framework which enables us to see how dominant groups limit parents' opportunities to provide support for their children's education through marginalization based on language, class, and immigration status. Through this I found that consistent with prior literature on parent involvement, Southern Latine parents faced barriers to supporting their children (Antony-Newman, 2019; Cross et al., 2019; McCarthy Foubert, 2023; Poza et al. 2014; Quiñones & Marquez Kiyama, 2014), brought on by the lack of accessible language supports and discriminatory experiences in an area that has still not invested in the resources to support a growing immigrant population. Identifying the barriers parents face in participating in their children's education may help explain why Latine youth fall behind in higher educational attainment as their key supports, parents, are faced with structural barriers, limiting the development of valuable sources of capital required for higher educational attainment (Langenkemp, 2019). These barriers also underscore the crucial need to promote linguistic equity, especially in areas that have not yet implemented widespread efforts to ensure that all voices and perspectives are heard and valued in their education systems (Menard-Warwick et al., 2023). Expanding on current understandings of LatCrit, the evidence I present also brings forth spatial inequality and how geographic location intersects with issues of inequality, particularly how Southern Latine communities living in rural areas face barriers to accessing resources like

transportation and internet access. In the ongoing discussion of LatCrit, these findings further the collective work to amplify the experiences and perspectives of People of Color to show a path toward a more equitable future. As the immigrant population continues to grow nationwide, increasingly in non-traditionally immigrant-receiving areas, this work illuminates the resources and investment necessary to create a culturally competent education ecosystem where Latine immigrant students and families can thrive. If not, these areas risk not just leaving behind vulnerable populations, but losing out on the individuals who can increase the knowledge, skills, and capacity of their workforce.

In investigating how SLEPs describe their experiences in the workplace when attempting to create a learning environment that affirms Southern Latine students' racial, linguistic, and cultural identity I found that there are great costs to being a trailblazer who serves a rapidly growing population of immigrants in an area where immigrants have not traditionally settled. Because of the little representation in the field of education, SLEPs face both macro and microaggressions. The challenges faced by trailblazing SLEPs in education have illuminated a staggering toll associated with pioneering in a field and location fraught with inequities, consistent with prior literature on Southern Latine education-based professionals which finds that they navigate systemic barriers when negotiating their relationship to policy, peers, and existing norms in this area (Monreal and Stutts, 2023; Dollarhide et al., 2013; Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2010; Monreal, 2022; Orelus, 2020; Spencer, 2017; Champion & Wilson-Jones, 2023; DeSante, 2013). In alignment with current understandings of LatCrit, the evidence I present also emphasizes how immigration status, language, ethnicity, and culture manifested in the workplace experiences of SLEPs who support Latine immigrant youth (Valdes, 1997; Valdes & Bender, 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2021). The narratives I share unveil a daunting reality marked by great

personal sacrifice and systemic barriers. The systemic barriers SLEPs face leave a profound impact on SLEPs mental, emotional, and physical health, underscoring the urgency of dismantling them. As we confront these harsh realities, it becomes clear that meaningful change requires more than individual resilience, but a collective commitment to restructuring educational institutions, fostering inclusivity, and championing equity to pave the way for a more diverse and supportive educational landscape.

In highlighting the resistant capital both parents and SLEPs leveraged to persist in their journey to advance educational opportunities for Southern Latine students, I found that parents demonstrated resistant capital both in their attitudes and by actively motivating their children to engage in resistance while SLEPs built resistance by reflecting on their experiences in the community and by finding community that provided emotional support and mentorship. Consistent with prior literature I find that parents play a pivotal role in advancing education opportunities for their children in the U.S. South by maintaining attitudes of resistance that enable their children also to build attitudes of resistance and together engage in resistance against systems of oppression (Yosso's 2005; Yosso et al., 2009; Sánchez-Connally, 2017). For SLEPs, there is also an alignment with prior literature that emphasizes the power of community in resistance (Monreal, 2022; Yosso, 2005). These findings shed light on how resistant capital helps parents and SLEPs create more equal opportunities for Latine students in a space like the U.S. South where they have few resources supporting them and many institutional barriers oppressing them. The evidence I present highlighting the use of resistant capital also adds to current perspectives of the U.S. South as an area dominated by regressive attitudes and instead highlights that parents and SLEPs in the U.S. South are pioneers of transformational resistance (Solórzano and Bernal, 2001), using their experiences of oppression to demand equitable opportunities for

current and future Southern Latines. Lastly, community emerges not only as a driving force but as the foundational bedrock that interweaves aspirations, resistance, and an enduring dedication to advancing education for the benefit of the Southern Latine community.

Conclusion

This dissertation contributes to the extant body of research that explores the experiences of Latine parents and educational-based professionals who play critical roles in supporting students' learning experiences, paying particular attention to the experiences of Southern Latines who are underrepresented in this research. North Carolina served as an ideal case study to investigate Southern Latine educational experiences due to its significant gaps between Latine and non-Latine groups in educational outcomes, its significant population growth in recent years, and its significant underrepresentation of Latines in higher education. Additionally, by leveraging data collected by a Latine-led and Latine-serving organization in North Carolina this dissertation corroborates, and is rooted in, the idea that those closest to the problem are closest to the solution. In illuminating the challenges and cultural wealth of a new, emerging Latine population in an area where immigrants have traditionally not settled, this dissertation can help policymakers and practitioners make sense of the unique experiences rapidly growing immigrant populations face in areas with little to no resources. In addition, this dissertation also elevates the stories of a unique subgroup of the Latine population that is underrepresented in the broader Latine educational literature. This is particularly important for Latines in the U.S. South, as elevating their marginalized voices legitimizes their experiences in an environment where the majority otherwise capitalizes on their silence. It is in this silence, that people in power are able to justify an underinvestment in public education that serves a growing Latine population, brush

off organizations as race-neutral and equal for all, and allow state and local policies that directly and negatively affect the population. Through this, the storytelling in this dissertation is, in itself, an act of social and political resistance to oppression.

Implications

In addition to the theoretical contributions this dissertation makes, it also has political and practical implications as it plays an important role in the first step of the policymaking process: problem definition. To create equitable solutions that truly serve this population an in-depth exploration of their experiences is needed which includes naming the experience and the conditions that enable it, thus this dissertation forms part of the foundation for creating practices and policies that elevate the experiences of Southern Latine students. First, politicians should consider providing schools with adequate funding to hire not just bilingual staff that will be overburdened and expected to perform more than they are compensated for, but trained and qualified Spanish-language education interpreters that can facilitate timely conversations between parents and school staff. In doing so, they not only maximize parent-school relationships for Latine parents but also alleviate some of the burden of severe underrepresentation in Latine staff. Second, politicians should also *strongly* reconsider restricting how educators can discuss critical race theory. CRT not only plays an important role in how teachers can support the development of a positive racial-ethnic identity of Latine students in the classroom, but it also sets the foundation for providing cultural competency training to staff that impart discrimination onto parents and SLEPs. Denying the inclusion of CRT in schools sends messages to white staff about what kinds of knowledge is prioritized and whose culture is protected by the state of North Carolina. In restricting CRT, the state leaves behind and harms

millions of students, parents, and education-based professionals in North Carolina. Third, this dissertation also upholds that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives play critical roles on university campuses in supporting Southern Latine students through higher education by hiring diverse staff and by funding culturally relevant wellness initiatives that guide them into safe and well-paid career paths that further the economic prosperity of the state as a whole. By highlighting the cultural wealth Southern Latines use to persist in non-affirming environments this dissertation posits that they have an abundance of cultural wealth to succeed, but their opportunities to advance are severely impacted by systemic underinvestment and the marginalization of their voices, underscoring the urgency for political leaders to provide support for more equitable practice.

REFERENCES

- Acevedo, N., & Solorzano, D. G. (2023). An overview of community cultural wealth: Toward a protective factor against racism. *Urban Education, 58*(7), 1470-1488.
- Allen, A., Scott, L. M., & Lewis, C. W. (2013). Racial microaggressions and African American and Hispanic students in urban schools: A call for culturally affirming education. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Teaching and Learning, 3*(2), 117-129.
- Alvarez, A. (2020). Experiential knowledge as capital and resistance among families from Mexican immigrant backgrounds. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 53*(4), 482-503.
- Antony-Newman, M. (2019). Parental involvement of immigrant parents: A meta-synthesis. *Educational Review, 71*(3), 362-381.
- Aragon, A. (2018). Achieving Latina students: Aspirational counterstories and critical reflections on parental community cultural wealth. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 17*(4), 373-385.
- Armstrong, E. (2020). How North Carolinian Nonprofit Organizations Foster Public Education Equity for Hispanic/Latinx Youth.
- Bancroft, M. (2015). Community interpreting: A profession rooted in social justice. In H. Mikkelsen & R. Jourdenais (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of interpreting* (pp. 217–235). Routledge.
- Bañuelos, M., & Flores, G. M. (2021). ‘I could see myself’: professors’ influence in first-generation Latinx college students’ pathways into doctoral programs. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 1*-21.
- Barajas, H. L., & Ronnkvist, A. (2007). Racialized space: Framing Latino and Latina experience in public schools. *Teachers College Record, 109*(6), 1517-1538.

- Barajas-Gonzalez, R. G., Torres, H. L., Urcuyo, A., Salamanca, E., & Kourousias, L. (2022). Racialization, discrimination, and depression: A mixed-method study of the impact of an anti-immigrant climate on Latina immigrant mothers and their children. *SSM-Mental Health*, 2, 100084.
- Bernal, G., Bonilla, J., & Bellido, C. (1995). Ecological validity and cultural sensitivity for outcome research: Issues for the cultural adaptation and development of psychosocial treatments with Hispanics. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 23, 67-82.
- Blaisdell, B. (2016). Schools as racial spaces: Understanding and resisting structural racism. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 29(2), 248-272.
- Briggs Jr, V. M. (2004). Guestworker programs lessons from the past and warnings for the future.
- Burciaga, R., & Kohli, R. (2018). Disrupting whitestream measures of quality teaching: The community cultural wealth of teachers of color. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 20(1), 5-12.
- Burns, A. (1993). *Maya in exile: Guatemalans in Florida*. Temple University Press.
- Calzada, E. J., Huang, K., Hernandez, M., Soriano, E., Acra, C. F., Dawson-McClure, S., et al. (2015). Family and teacher characteristics as predictors of parent involvement in education during early childhood among *Afro-Caribbean and Latino immigrant families*. *Urban Education*, 50, 870–896. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085914534862>.
- Cammarota, J. (2014). Misspoken in Arizona: Latina/o students document the articulations of racism. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 47(3), 321-333.
- Champion, T., & Wilson-Jones, L. (2023). The Lived Experiences of Teachers of Color and Racial Microaggressions. *Journal of Research Initiatives*, 8(1), 4.

- Chávez-Moreno, L. C. (2023). Examining Race in LatCrit: A Systematic Review of Latinx Critical Race Theory in Education. *Review of Educational Research*, 48, 419–439.
- Chetty, R., Friedman, J. N., Hilger, N., Saez, E., Schanzenbach, D. W., & Yagan, D. (2011). How does your kindergarten classroom affect your earnings? Evidence from Project STAR. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 126(4), 1593-1660.
- Chetty, R., Hendren, N., Jones, M. R., & Porter, S. R. (2020). Race and economic opportunity in the United States: An intergenerational perspective. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 135(2), 711-783.
- Ceballo, R., Maurizi, L. K., Suarez, G. A., & Aretakis, M. T. (2014). Gift and sacrifice: parental involvement in Latino adolescents' education. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 20, 116–127. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033472>.
- Collins, S. M. (2011). Diversity in the post affirmative action labor market: A proxy for racial progress?. *Critical Sociology*, 37(5), 521-540.
- Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative sociology*, 13(1), 3-21.
- Crenshaw, K., & Gotanda, N. (Eds.). (1995). Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement. The New Press.
- Cross, F. L., Rivas-Drake, D., Rowley, S., Mendez, E., Ledon, C., Waller, A., & Kruger, D. J. (2019). Documentation-status concerns and Latinx parental school involvement. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*, 5(1), 29.
- Dalton, S., & Villagran, M. (2018). Minimizing and addressing microaggressions in the workplace: Be proactive, part 2. *College & Research Libraries News*, 79(10), 538–564. <https://doi.org/10.5860/crln.79.10.538>

- Davis, M. L. (2008). *The Methodist unification: Christianity and the politics of race in the Jim Crow era*. NYU Press.
- DeCuir, J. T., & Dixson, A. D. (2004). "So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there": Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher*, 33(5), 26-31.
- Del Cid, J. L. (2011). The American dream: An illusion or reality for Latino immigrants.
- Delgado, R. (1989). Storytelling for oppositionists and others: A plea for narrative. *Michigan Law Review*, 87(8), 2411-2441.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory*. Ed.
- Delgado Bernal, D. (1997). *Chicana school resistance and grassroots leadership: Providing an alternative history of the 1968 East Los Angeles blowouts*. University of California, Los Angeles.
- DeSante, C. D. (2013). Working twice as hard to get half as far: Race, work ethic, and America's deserving poor. *American Journal of Political Science*, 57(2), 342-356.
- Dollarhide, C. T., Bowen, N. V., Baker, C. A., Kassoy, F. R., Mayes, R. D., & Baughman, A. V. (2013). Exploring the work experiences of school counselors of color. *Professional School Counseling*, 17(1), 2156759X0001700105.
- Edin, K., & Shaefer, H. L. (2015). *\$2.00 a day: Living on almost nothing in America*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Enriquez, L. E. (2015). Multigenerational punishment: Shared experiences of undocumented immigration status within mixed-status families. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 77(4), 939-953.

Elliott, M. (2022, April 26). Need is growing for interpreters and translators in schools.

<https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nc/charlotte/news/2022/04/06/the-need-is-growing-for-interpreters-and-translators-in-the-k-12-setting>

Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA), H.R. 40, 93rd Cong. (1974).

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/93rd-congress/house-bill/40#:~:text=Equal%20Educational%20Opportunities%20Act%20%2D%20Declares,basis%20for%20determining%20public%20school>

Embrick, D. G. (2008). The diversity ideology: Keeping major transnational corporations white and male in an era of globalization. *Globalization and America: Race, human rights, and inequality*, 23-42.

Embrick, D. G. (2011). The diversity ideology in the business world: A new oppression for a new age. *Critical Sociology*, 37(5), 541-556.

Facts & Figures Education in North Carolina. (2022, July). Data Is the Key to Progress.

Retrieved December 2022, from <https://www.bestnc.org/factsandfigures/>.

Fernández, É., Rincón, B. E., & Hinojosa, J. K. (2023). (Re) creating family and reinforcing pedagogies of the home: How familial capital manifests for Students of Color pursuing STEM majors. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 26(2), 147-163.

Fields, A. R. (2014). The effects of systemic racism on the academic achievement of African American male adolescents. Western Michigan University.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (MB Ramos, Trans.). New York: Continuum, 2007.

Fulwood, S. (1991, June 13). California is most racially diverse state : Census Data: It has the greatest percentage of Asians and Latinos and the second-highest number of blacks and American Indians. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved December 4, 2022, from

<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-06-13-mn-731-story.html#:~:text=Over%20the%20same%20period%2C%20the,%2C%20from%206.4%25%20in%201980>

Gándara, P., & Contreras, F. (2009). *The Latino education crisis: The consequences of failed social policies*. Harvard University Press.

Gil, E., & Johnson, A. (2021). “We, as Parents, Do Have a Voice”: Learning from Community-Based Programs Effectively Engaging Parents in Urban Communities. *Urban Education*.

Giles, H. C. (2005). Three narratives of parent-educator relationships: toward counselor repertoires for bridging the urban parent-school divide. *Professional School Consulting*, 8, 228–235.

Gonzalez, M. T., Matambanadzo, S., & Vélez Martínez, S. I. (2021). Latina and Latino Critical Legal Theory: LatCrit Theory, Praxis and Community. *Revista Direito e Práxis*, 12, 1316-1341.

Grace, M., & Gerdes, A. C. (2019). Parent-teacher relationships and parental involvement in education in Latino families. *Contemporary School Psychology*, 23, 444-454.

Grant, K. B., & Ray, J. A. (2010). *Home, school, and community collaboration: Culturally responsive family involvement*. Sage.

Griego Jones, T. (2003). Contribution of Hispanic parents’ perspectives to teacher preparation. *The School Community Journal*, 13, 73–97.

Guajardo, A. D., Robles-Schrader, G. M., Aponte-Soto, L., & Neubauer, L. C. (2020). LatCrit theory as a framework for social justice evaluation: Considerations for evaluation and evaluators. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 166, 65–75.

- Gutiérrez, D. G. (2016). A historic overview of Latino immigration and the demographic transformation of the United States. *The new Latino studies reader: A twenty-first-century perspective*, 108.
- Guzmán, B. L., Kouyoumdjian, C., Medrano, J. A., & Bernal, I. (2018). Community cultural wealth and immigrant Latino parents. *Journal of Latinos and Education*.
- Hall, S. (2006). Cultural studies and its theoretical legacies. In Stuart Hall (pp. 272-285). Routledge.
- Holland, N. E. (2017). Beyond conventional wisdom: Community cultural wealth and the college knowledge of African American youth in the United States. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 20(6), 796-810.
- Huber, L. P. (2023). Using Latina/o critical race theory (LatCrit) and racist nativism to explore intersectionality in the educational experiences of undocumented Chicana college students. *Educational Foundations*.
- Johnson, H., McGhee, E., & Mejia, M. C. (2022, November 15). California's population. California's Population. Retrieved December 4, 2022, from <https://www.ppic.org/publication/californias-population/#:~:text=From%202010%20to%202020%2C%20California%27s,first%20time%20in%20California%27s%20history>
- Kelly, E., & Dobbin, F. (1998). How affirmative action became diversity management: Employer response to antidiscrimination law, 1961 to 1996. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 41(7), 960-984.
- Kendi, I. X. (2016). Why the academic achievement gap is a racist idea. *Black Perspectives*.

- Kim, Y., & Calzada, E. J. (2019). Skin color and academic achievement in young, Latino children: Impacts across gender and ethnic group. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 25*(2), 220.
- Krogstad, J. M., Passel, J. S., & Noe-Bustamante, L. (2022, September 23). Key facts about U.S. Latinos for National Hispanic Heritage month. Pew Research Center. Retrieved December 4, 2022, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/09/23/key-facts-about-u-s-latinos-for-national-hispanic-heritage-month/#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20Hispanic%20population%20reached,increase%20in%20the%20Asian%20population>
- Kwate, N. O. A., & Threadcraft, S. (2017). Dying fast and dying slow in Black space: Stop and frisk's public health threat and a comprehensive necropolitics. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race, 14*(2), 535-556.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record, 97*(1), 47-68.
- Langenkamp, A. G. (2019). Latino/a immigrant parents' educational aspirations for their children. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 22*(2), 231-249.
- LeFevre, A. L., & Shaw, T. V. (2012). Latino parent involvement and school success: Longitudinal effects of formal and informal support. *Education and Urban Society, 44*(6), 707-723.
- LatinxEd. (2022). (rep.). ComunidadNC Report. Retrieved February 2022, from <https://LatinxEd.org/ComunidadNC/>.
- Lipsky, M. (2010). Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public service. Russell Sage Foundation.

- Luna, N. A., & Martinez, M. (2013). A qualitative study using community cultural wealth to understand the educational experiences of Latino college students. *Journal of Praxis in Multicultural Education*, 7(1), 2.
- Markowitz, A. J., Bassok, D., & Grissom, J. A. (2020). Teacher-child racial/ethnic match and parental engagement with Head Start. *American Educational Research Journal*, 57(5), 2132-2174.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2014). *Designing qualitative research*. Sage publications.
- Martin-Beltrán, M., Montoya-Ávila, A., & Canales, N. (2018). “Do you want to tell your own narrative?”: How one teacher and her students engage in resistance by leveraging community cultural wealth. *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal*, 12(3), 97-121.
- Marx, S., & Larson, L. L. (2012). Taking off the color-blind glasses: Recognizing and supporting Latina/o students in a predominantly white school. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48(2), 259-303.
- Massey, D. S., & Denton, N. A. (1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass*. Harvard University Press.
- Mathema, S., & Hermann, A. (2018, September 2). Revival and opportunity: Immigrants in Rural America. Center for American Progress.
<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/revival-and-opportunity/#:~:text=More%20than%201%20million%20immigrants,with%20only%209%20percent%2C%20respectively.>
- Merolla, D. M., & Jackson, O. (2019). Structural racism as the fundamental cause of the academic achievement gap. *Sociology Compass*, 13(6), e12696.

- McCarthy Foubert, J. L. (2023). Still-restrictive equality in shared school governance: Black parents' engagement experiences and the persistence of white supremacy in a liberal public school district. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 36(4), 543-558.
- McGrath, C., Palmgren, P. J., & Liljedahl, M. (2019). Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Medical teacher*, 41(9), 1002-1006.
- Menard-Warwick, J., Peregrina-Williams, S. A., Deeb-Sossa, N., Uliasz, A., & Snow, K. (2023). Toward language justice: systemic dilemmas in the implementation of interpreting services in a California school district. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 1-19.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. sage.
- Mills, C. W. (2014). WHITE TIME: The Chronic Injustice of Ideal Theory1. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 11(1), 27-42.
- Monreal, T. (2022). "Here Being in School Is Worse": How Latinx Teachers Navigate, Recreate, and Instigate Hostile Spaces in the US South. *Educational Studies*, 58(1), 50-73.
- Monreal, T., & Stutts, C. (2023). The Ambiguity of (non) Belonging: Latinx Teachers Negotiate Critical Social Studies in the US South. *Critical Questions in Education*, 14(1), 87-106.
- Muniz, I. (2013). Latino principal perceptions of their impact on Latino students (Doctoral dissertation, University of La Verne).
- Muro, J. A. (2024). "The PTA intimidates": racially segregated parent organizations in a dual immersion school. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 27(1), 55-74.
- National Archives and Records Administration. (2022, June 9). The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. National Archives and Records Administration.

<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/guadalupe-hidalgo#:~:text=By%20its%20terms%2C%20Mexico%20ceded,Oklahoma%2C%20Kansas%2C%20and%20Wyoming.>

NALEO. (2020). (rep.). 2020 Census Profiles North Carolina. Monterey Park, CA.

NC Educational Attainment Dashboard. MyFutureNC. (2020).

<https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org/county-explorer/>

NC public ED at a glance. Public Schools First NC. (2022, July). Retrieved December 4, 2022, from <https://www.publicschoolsfirstnc.org/resources/fact-sheets/nc-public-ed-at-a-glance/#:~:text=Student%20Information,to%20130%2C286%20in%202021%2D2022%20>

NC Rural Center. (2023). Rural broadband: Accessibility, affordability, and adoption.

<https://www.ncruralcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Broadband-Collaborative-Project-Q-2.pdf>

Noe-Bustamante, L., Lopez, M. H., & Krogstad, J. M. (2020, July 10). U.S. Hispanic population surpassed 60 million in 2019, but growth has slowed. Pew Research Center. Retrieved December 4, 2022, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/07/07/u-s-hispanic-population-surpassed-60-million-in-2019-but-growth-has-slowed/>

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction . (2022). 2021–22 Performance and Growth of North Carolina Public Schools. Raleigh, NC.

North Carolina Office of State Budget and Management (NC OSBM). (2023, December). North Carolina’s strong population growth continues. NC OSBM.

<https://www.osbm.nc.gov/blog/2023/12/20/north-carolinas-strong-population-growth-continues>

- North Carolina Trade Facts. Office of the United States Trade Representative. (2018).
<https://ustr.gov/map/state-benefits/nc>
- Okraski, C. V., & Madison, S. M. (2020). Pueblo Pequeño, Infierno Grande: Shifting the burden of Latinx Spanish teacher retention in the rural South. *Foreign Language Annals*, 53(3), 594-612.
- Orelus, P. W. (2020). The cost of being professors and administrators of color in predominantly white institutions: Unpacking microaggression, isolation, exclusion, and unfairness through a critical race lens. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 14(2), 117-132.
- Orozco, G. L. (2008). Understanding the culture of low-income immigrant Latino parents: key to involvement. *School Community Journal*, 18(1), 21-37.
- Pager, D. (2007). The use of field experiments for studies of employment discrimination: Contributions, critiques, and directions for the future. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 609(1), 104-133.
- Pager, D., Bonikowski, B., & Western, B. (2009). Discrimination in a low-wage labor market: A field experiment. *American sociological review*, 74(5), 777-799.
- Peña, E. D. (2007). Lost in translation: Methodological considerations in cross-cultural research. *Child development*, 78(4), 1255-1264.
- Perreira, K. M., Chapman, M. V., & Stein, G. L. (2006). Becoming an American parent: Overcoming challenges and finding strength in a new immigrant Latino community. *Journal of Family issues*, 27(10), 1383-1414.
- Pizarro, M., & Kohli, R. (2020). "I stopped sleeping": Teachers of color and the impact of racial battle fatigue. *Urban Education*, 55(7), 967-991.

- Poza, L. E., Brooks, M. D., & Valdés, G. (2014). Entre familia: Immigrant parents' strategies for involvement in children's schooling. *School Community Journal, 24*(1), 119.
- Quillian, L., Pager, D., Hexel, O., & Midtbøen, A. H. (2017). Meta-analysis of field experiments shows no change in racial discrimination in hiring over time. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 114*(41), 10870-10875.
- Quiñones, S., & Marquez Kiyama, J. (2014). Contra la corriente (against the current): the role of Latino fathers in family-school engagement. *School Community Journal, 24*, 149–176.
- Ray, V. (2019). A theory of racialized organizations. *American Sociological Review, 84*(1), 26-53.
- Reynolds, A. L., Sneva, J. N., & Beehler, G. P. (2010). The influence of racism-related stress on the academic motivation of Black and Latino/a students. *Journal of college student development, 51*(2), 135-149.
- Roberts, D. (2011). *Fatal invention: How science, politics, and big business re-create race in the twenty-first century*. New Press/ORIM.
- Rodela, K. C., & Rodriguez-Mojica, C. (2020). Equity leadership informed by community cultural wealth: Counterstories of Latinx school administrators. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 56*(2), 289-320.
- Rodela, K., Rodriguez-Mojica, C., & Cochrun, A. (2021). 'You guys are bilingual aren't you?' Latinx educational leadership pathways in the New Latinx Diaspora. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 24*(1), 84-107.
- Rodriguez, G. (2023). From troublemakers to pobrecitos: Honoring the complexities of survivorship of Latino youth in a suburban high school. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 22*(2), 595-612.

- Rodriguez, N. (1996). US immigration and intergroup relations in the late 20th century: *African Americans and Latinos. Social Justice, 23*(3 (65), 111-124.
- Rodríguez, N. (2012). New Southern Neighbors: Latino immigration and prospects for intergroup relations between African-Americans and Latinos in the South. *Latino Studies, 10*, 18-40.
- Rodriguez, S., & Monreal, T. (2017). “This state is racist..”: Policy problematization and undocumented youth experiences in the New Latino South. *Educational Policy, 31*(6), 764-800.
- Rodriguez, S. (2021). “They let you back in the country?”: Racialized inequity and the miseducation of Latinx undocumented students in the New Latino south. *The Urban Review, 53*(4), 565-590.
- Roy, K. M., Tubbs, C. Y., & Burton, L. M. (2004). Don’t have no time: Daily rhythms and the organization of time for low-income families. *Family Relations, 53*(2), 168-178.
- Sáenz, V. B., García-Louis, C., Drake, A. P., & Guida, T. (2018). Leveraging their family capital: How Latino males successfully navigate the community college. *Community College Review, 46*(1), 40-61.
- Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.
- Sánchez-Connally, P. (2017). *The Role of Resistance and Social Capital in Facilitating Latino/a College Success*.
- Sewell, A. A. (2016). The racism-race reification process: A mesolevel political economic framework for understanding racial health disparities. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity, 2*(4), 402-432.

- Solorzano, D. G., & Delgado Bernal, D. (2001). Examining transformational resistance through a critical race and LatCrit theory framework: Chicana and Chicano students in an urban context. *Urban education, 36*(3), 308-342.
- Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative inquiry, 8*(1), 23-44.
- Spencer, D. G. (2017). The hidden obstacles of microaggressions: a study of Latina administrators in California community colleges (Doctoral dissertation, California State University, Sacramento).
- Stevens, C., Liu, C. H., & Chen, J. A. (2018). Racial/ethnic disparities in US college students' experience: Discrimination as an impediment to academic performance. *Journal of American college health, 66*(7), 665-673.
- Toomey, R. B., & Storlie, C. A. (2016). School counselors' intervention in bias-related incidents among Latino students. *Journal of School Violence, 15*(3), 343-364.
- Thomas, W. I., & Thomas, D. S. (1928). *The Child in America: Behavior Problems and Programs*, New York, AA Knopf.
- Trumbull, E., Greenfield, P. M., Rothstein-Fisch, C., Maynard, A. E., Quiroz, B., & Yuan, Q. (2020). From Altered Perceptions to Altered Practice: Teachers Bridge Cultures in the Classroom. *School Community Journal, 30*(1), 243-266.
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. 42 Cong. (1964). <https://www.justice.gov/crt/fcs/TitleVI>
- Tippett, R. (2021, October 26). *North Carolina's Hispanic Community: 2021 snapshot*. Carolina Demography. Retrieved December 4, 2022, from <https://www.ncdemography.org/2021/10/18/north-carolinas-hispanic-community-2021->

snapshot/#:~:text=Statewide%2C%2010.7%25%20of%20North%20Carolina%27s,the%20national%20average%20(18.7%25)

Tomaskovic-Devey, D. (1993). Gender & racial inequality at work: The sources and consequences of job segregation (No. 27). Cornell University Press.

Turaga, R. (2020). Managing microaggressions at work. *IUP Journal of Soft Skills*, 14(3), 42-51.

Turner, M. A., Santos, R., Levy, D. K., Wissoker, D. A., Aranda, C., & Pitingolo, R. (2016).

Housing discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities 2012: Executive summary.

United States Census Bureau. (2021). U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts: North Carolina.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/NC/PST045222>

U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice (2015). English Learners DCL.

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf>

Valdes, F. (1998). Foreword: Under construction-LatCrit consciousness, community, and theory.

La Raza LJ, 10, 1.

Valdes, F., & Bender, S. W. (2021). *LatCrit: From critical legal theory to academic activism*.

NYU press.

Valenzuela, A. (2010). Subtractive schooling: US-Mexican youth and the politics of caring. *State*

University of New York Press.

Vélez, L. G. (2011). Persistent inequality: Contemporary realities in the education of undocumented latina/o students.

Villanueva, I. (1996). Change in the educational life of Chicano families across three generations. *Education and Urban Society*, 29(1), 13-34.

- Walker, A., Shafer, J., & Iiams, M. (2004). Not in my classroom”: Teacher attitudes towards English language learners in the mainstream classroom. *NABE Journal of Research and Practice*, 2(1), 130-160.
- Warikoo, N., Sinclair, S., Fei, J., & Jacoby-Senghor, D. (2016). Examining racial bias in education: A new approach. *Educational Researcher*, 45(9), 508-514.
- Weeks, G. B., Weeks, J. R., & Weeks, A. J. (2006). Latino immigration in the US South: “Carolatinos” and public policy in Charlotte, North Carolina. *Latino (a) Research Review*, 6(1-2), 50-72.
- Weise, J. M. (2015). *Corazón de Dixie: Mexicanos in the US South since 1910*. UNC Press Books.
- Wilson, C. A. (1996). *Racism: From slavery to advanced capitalism* (Vol. 17). Sage.
- Wilson, W. J. (2011). *When work disappears: The world of the new urban poor*. Vintage.
- Wingfield, A. H. (2009). Racializing the glass escalator: Reconsidering men's experiences with women's work. *Gender & society*, 23(1), 5-26.
- Wingfield, A. H. (2010). Are some emotions marked "whites only"? Racialized feeling rules in professional workplaces. *Social Problems*, 57(2), 251-268.
- Wingfield, A. H., & Alston, R. S. (2014). Maintaining hierarchies in predominantly White organizations: A theory of racial tasks. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 58(2), 274-287.
- Yosso*, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race ethnicity and education*, 8(1), 69-91.
- Yosso, T., Smith, W., Ceja, M., & Solórzano, D. (2009). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate for Latina/o undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(4), 659-691.

Appendix A1

Comunidad NC Listening Tour Protocol

Parent English Interview/Focus Group Protocol

Parents-English

1. Please tell us your name? Where are you from? What grade are your students in and are there any extracurricular activities they are a part of?
2. What has your personal experience with public schools been?
3. How has the transition to virtual learning or how has COVID impacted your experience?
4. What information or resources do Latinx parents, caregivers or mentors need to better support youth *before graduating high school? After enrolling in college?*
5. What skills and talents do we as Latinxs bring to the community? How can Latinxs' cultural contributions be brought out more or be more fully embraced within the school system?
6. Is there someone at school or in your community that you can always turn to for help with school or academic matters? How does this person or organization help and support you?
7. What would you change in public schools or what program or resource would you invest in to improve the experiences of Latinx students and families within the school system?
8. What are your dreams for the success of your children? Either academically and/or professionally.
9. Before we wrap up, we'd like to know if there is anything that you would like to add? Or are involved with right now that brings you joy and that we might be able to promote?

Parent Spanish Interview/Focus Group Protocol

Parents- Spanish

1. ¿Cómo se llama? ¿De dónde es? Díganos en qué grado están sus estudiantes y cualquier actividad extracurricular de la que formen parte.
2. ¿Cuál ha sido su experiencia personal con las escuelas públicas? ¿Tanto antes como después de la pandemia?
3. ¿Qué información o recursos necesitan los padres, cuidadores o mentores Latinxs para apoyar mejor a los jóvenes antes de graduarse de la escuela secundaria? ¿Y/o después de matricularse en la universidad?
4. ¿Qué habilidades y talentos brindamos a la comunidad? ¿Cómo se pueden destacar más en el sistema escolar?
5. ¿Hay alguien en la escuela o en su comunidad a quien siempre pueda acudir en busca de ayuda sobre asuntos escolares o académicos? ¿De qué manera le ayuda y apoya esta persona/organización?
6. ¿Qué cambiaría en las escuelas públicas o en qué programa o recurso invertiría para mejorar las experiencias de estudiantes y familias Latinxs dentro del sistema escolar?
7. ¿Cuáles son los sueños que tiene para el éxito de sus hijos? Ya sea académicamente y/o profesionalmente.

Appendix A2

Alamance Forward Listening Tour Protocol

Facilitation Guide | Parental/Community Governance

Invitees List

Topic: Parental/Community Governance

Audience: Parents and/or Community Leaders

English

Rompehielo: Levanta la mano si:

1. La escuela ofrece apoyos bilingües o intérpretes.
2. La escuela presenta un enlace familiar bilingüe a las familias para ayudar a los maestros a conectarse con las familias y superar las barreras del idioma y la cultura.
3. Se ha comunicado con el maestro de su estudiante
 - a. Una vez al año
 - b. Al semestre
 - c. Al mes
 - d. Solo cuando hay problemas
4. Ha asistido a una actividad orientada a las familias
5. Ha sido invitado a las reuniones de la Asociación de Padres y Maestros (PTA)?
6. Los maestros han enviado a su casa materiales que ayudan a los padres a completar actividades o aprender con sus hijos
7. Los maestros comentan o notifican sobre el progreso de su estudiante
 - a. Una vez al año
 - b. Al semestre
 - c. Al mes
 - d. A la semana
8. Conoce cómo entrar o navegar la escuela de su hijo/hija
9. El personal de la recepción proporciona información fácilmente y responde sus preguntas o llamadas
10. Los programas o líderes de su escuela responden a lo que las familias dicen que quieren saber
11. Ha obtenido información sobre programas académicos o extracurriculares y cómo solicitarlos para su estudiante
12. La escuela consulta conmigo y con otras familias antes de tomar decisiones importantes (por ejemplo, cambios en el plan de estudios, políticas escolares, código de vestimenta).
13. La escuela brinda oportunidades para que las familias desarrollen relaciones y planteen inquietudes con los líderes escolares, los funcionarios públicos y los líderes comerciales y comunitarios.

14. La escuela informa a los padres sobre cómo los maestros, los padres y la comunidad pueden trabajar juntos para mejorar el progreso estudiantil

Introducción:

1. ¡Preséntate y comparte con el grupo por qué quisiste participar en la mesa redonda de hoy!
 - a. ¿Por qué es importante para ti tener conversaciones acerca de la educación en Alamance?
2. Para conocernos mejor, si gusta, al compartir su nombre, también nos puede contar sobre el significado o la historia detrás de su nombre!

Questions:

1. We want to hear about your experiences navigating your child's educational system. Can you tell us about a time when it was easy or difficult for you to get involved with your school? *Or other school or youth support agencies?*
2. Please share a story about when **you used** your voice as a **parent/community leader**. What was the response you got?
 - a. If you **have not** used your voice as a parent/community leader, what are those things that make it difficult?
3. Was there a time or issue in which you would have liked to be involved? What would have helped you to ask, request or demand something from your son/daughter?
4. Which people in your school do you consider to be experts or leaders?
 - a. Who else should be at those governing or decision-making tables?
 - i. *For what matters?*
5. How would it be different if... parents, youth, and the community had governance or rights to impact school decisions?
6. What are (*or would be*) your preferred ways to stay connected to your child's school?
7. How could we as **parents/community leaders** increase community involvement/governance or solicit more opportunities to do so from education leaders?
 - a. How can we increase access to educational leaders or lead initiatives ourselves?
 - b. What help do we need to make our voices heard?

Cierre:

8. ¿Hay algo de lo que no hemos hablado que le gustaría compartir?

Appendix A3

Education Leaders Issue Brief

One-on-one Interview Protocol

Spring 2023

LatinxED

LatinxED is a 501c3 nonprofit devoted to advancing the educational experience of Latinx migrant families in education. Our mission is to invest in Latinx leadership to advance educational equity and opportunity in North Carolina. LatinxED envisions culturally sustaining education systems that recognize, meet, and honor the diverse needs of Latinx immigrant families.

Issue Brief Description

LatinxED is conducting the following Issue Brief as a part of a grant that was received through the Belk Foundation. This issue brief seeks to explore the question: **how do we get more Latinx leaders in education?** Through semi-informal one-on-one interviews and focus groups with key Latinx and non-Latinx education leaders in North Carolina, this brief will highlight urgent needs, promising practices, possibilities for recruitment, retention, rejuvenation and longevity for Latinx education leaders. Interview participants have been identified through LatinxED's network of previous LatinxED fellows, education leaders we have engaged with across the state, and education leaders we have not engaged with yet. The group of interviewees was intentionally selected to have a widespread representation of education leaders across NC's regions. After folks have been interviewed, assigned staff members will analyze the interview transcripts, and create the Issue Brief that will be public for anyone interested in the topic to review.

How do we define "education leader"?

- Any Latinx educator regardless of their position.
- Fellowship definition: an education leader as someone who uses their voice and/or power to advocate for education issues that impact the Latine community. No matter your position or title, you can be an education leader.

Informed Consent

All interview audio, transcripts and notes will be anonymized and kept confidential within LatinxED's organizational files. Do you grant LatinxED consent to record this interview audio using Zoom recording, and use the audio recording for transcribing and note-taking for the purposes of this issue brief and other relevant use within the organization?

Pause for interviewees' answers. Once the interviewee has given verbal consent, hit Record button on Zoom.

Interview Questions

Green - questions to always ask

Yellow - questions to ask depending on the context/interviewee, can skip if not relevant
Red - questions to try to fit into the interview if time permits, don't often have the time to ask them

Motivation/Recruitment

1. Introduction question: why did you want to become an educator? Tell us your story!
2. What do you think Latinx students need to see for education to be an attractive career they can consider?
3. What kept you interested and motivated in pursuing this career after beginning your education journey?

Attrition (Challenges)

4. What has made your work in education difficult?
5. Have you ever considered leaving the field of education? Why or why not?
6. [if you've left the field of education] What would you have said when leaving the teaching profession in an exit interview?

Persistence/Retention

7. [(if you were a teacher and left or are planning on leaving the position] What would it take for you to want to stay in the field of education/stay in teaching?
8. What would make the teaching profession desirable and sustainable for you/others?

Longevity/Sustainability

9. What would contribute to the longevity of Latinx education leaders to stay and grow in the field of education? (holistic wellbeing, personal, professional growth)
10. How can Latinx education leaders have a long and fruitful career in education, if they choose to?

Opportunities for Rejuvenation/Reimagination of Education System

11. What would a welcoming teaching/education environment look like, feel like, sounds like, smell like to you?
12. Magic wand moment: you have unlimited resources. Is there a program, idea, or initiative you would launch to recruit more Latinx students into education?

Extra Question Bank - if you have more time

- How can we use our energy and time for preparing students for what is needed in this ever changing world? What skills do they actually need now?
- Shifting culture - What values are we embracing in education as a whole? What values need to shift & be re/deprioritized?

- How do we build adaptable and flexible education systems that can more readily and effectively change as the world, technology, societies are ever changing?
- How is the education system adapting to the speed of the change in the world? What is needed to keep up with this constant state of change?
- How do we have effective leadership at every level of education?
- Scenario Question: If you were superintendent - what would you prioritize to address the teacher shortage, burnout, retention & recruitment issues?

Wrap Up Question

- Make space for any lingering thoughts before wrapping up
- Thank them for sharing their time, energy and experience with us
- Remind them that the issue brief will anonymize their responses and will be available for public use, so they could use it too to advocate for their work
- This research will also feed into the ongoing iterations of LatinxEd's work to support Latinx education leaders, so though the issue brief is the only product at this moment, we know this research will catalyze and add onto other work in the future

Parking Lot - Ideas that come up

- Helping educators learn about advocacy (voice->power) ex. school board, local/state government committees, PTAs,

Education Leaders Issue Brief Protocol
Focus Group Protocol
Fall 2023

*For individuals enrolled in a college/university programs, or in the workforce

Note: Focus Group Ideal number would be between 3-4 people

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. This focus group is a part of LatinxEd's upcoming issue brief where we are trying to learn more about the needs and experiences of Latine Education Leaders in the field and the conditions that best support their personal and professional well-being. The interview will take approximately 90 minutes and will be audio-recorded. **All personal information will be de-identified to your level of comfort indicated on the written consent form.** Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may request at any time that we stop the interview or turn off the audio recording. You may also request at any time that we not include the interview in the study. I will be recording this discussion on this audio-recorder. Is it ok with you for me to record this conversation? [wait for answer....press record]

[STATE DATE & TIME]

Interviewer Note: Whenever possible, try to focus on one question at a time so participants can thoroughly answer it.

Overview Questions

1. To begin, I'd like to hear more about your stories, but first could we go around and introduce your name and your current job title and institution you're employed at.

Motivation/Recruitment

Later, I'll be asking about the reasons you are still in education, but first I'd like to know:

2. To begin, walk me through your story, why did you *initially* decide on your career over other careers? (Probe only after the participant has answered the question if they haven't addressed these: What kinds of values did you have at the time you choose your career? Any skills you wanted to use or gain? How did you consider pay? What about work-life balance?)

Persistence/Retention

Now shifting into the reasons you have stayed,

3. What have you gained in your current role? Why do you continue to choose this career path over others?

4. Now, I'm going to share my screen and show you a list of tangible benefits or incentives that people commonly list as important in their careers. Which of these have contributed to your ability and/or desire to stay in your career? Link [Here](#)

Attrition/Challenges

Thank you all for sharing your stories with me. Now, I'd like to shift to talk more about the challenges you have faced in your career. (**Interviewer Note:** this is a smaller section but you may linger here for a while as this may be space where people feel they can vent which is GOOD, just make sure you're probing for specific examples and following up with "why" and "how")

5. Can you describe specific challenges that have made you want to quit your job or change careers?
 - a. Any challenges specific to your identity as a Latine leader?
 - b. Any challenges related to the list I shared before? I will share the list again to give you time to think. Link [Here](#)

Supports/Assets

6. Now can you go through some of the supports that have helped you navigate your work as an education leader? (Probe only after the participant has answered the question if they haven't addressed these: Any particular resources that have been helpful? What kinds of networks have you relied on? What about financial resources? Any technical support?)

Rejuvenation/Reimagination

For these questions we want to reimagine how education systems can better recognize, meet, and honor the needs of Latinx education leaders. Overall, we're thinking about which conditions move leaders from an experience of survival to thriving. I will leave the [list](#) of qualities on screen for you to reference if you'd like.

7. What kinds of conditions make, or would make, your job a **welcoming environment where you can express your cultural identity**?
 - a. For example - If your job has a welcoming environment, share more about what or who is the special sauce.
 - b. If there are areas of growth, what or who could be better? (probe: things your boss does, your coworkers do, attitudes, behaviors, practices, or policies)
8. What kinds of supports make, or would make, you confident in **your role to grow as a professional**?
9. What kind of supports make, or would make, your career **sustainable** given your intersecting identities?

Concluding Thoughts

Moving on to some concluding thoughts,

10. Is there anything else I should have asked you about your decision to enter the field of education and your experiences being an education leader in NC that I didn't already? Is there anything else you would like to share?

Education Leaders Issue Brief On-Screen Benefits List

- Pay
- Supportive Leadership
- Support from your family
- Mentorship Received
- Bilingual Bonuses
- Leadership Incentives
- Work-Life Balance
- Flexible Schedule/WFH options
- Community Service/Giving Back Opportunities
- Retirement Benefits
- Health Insurance
- Immigration Documentation
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Efforts
- Work support for child and/or elderly care
- Paid Time Off
- Personal Fulfillment/Joy from job
- Wellness/Holistic Health Opportunities
- Others?

Appendix B
Codebook

Community (5) - Mentions of community members that support, or hinder, individuals in their educational and/or professional journeysupport, or hinder, individuals in their educational and/or professional journey	Family	Descriptions of family who lend, or do not lend, support through words of encouragement, acts of service, or financial resources
	Organizations	Mentions of organizations that have, or have not, supported the personal or professional growth of the individual
	Staff	Mentions of staff that have, or have not, supported the personal or professional growth of the individual (teachers/professors/staff members)
	Friends	Mentions of friends that have, or have not, supported the personal or professional growth of the individual
	Students/Mentees	Mentions of students and/or mentees who play a role in the personal or professional growth of an individual
Drivers of Access (4) - Mentions of factors that support, or hinder, individuals in their educational and/or professional journey	Financial Resources	Mentions of financial resources such as scholarships, fellowships, and professional development stipends that have supported the personal or professional growth of the individual
	Policies	Explicit mentions of local, state, or federal policies that amplify, or hinder, the personal or professional growth of the individual
	Knowledge/Know-How	Understanding of how the U.S. system of education works and how to navigate PK-Grad School; includes misconceptions, limited knowledge, or a lack of knowledge

	Resistance	Examples engaging in oppositional behavior that challenges inequality
	Language	Mentions of language and/or linguistic access and how they support or hinder the personal or professional growth of an individual
	Mentorship	Descriptions of mentorship that encourage, or hinder, individuals to grow professionally and personally
	Exposure Opportunities	Descriptions of opportunities that expose the individual to new opportunities that change the direction of the individuals trajectory for example (e.g., internships, jobs, or conferences)
	Giving back/paying it forward	Descriptions of feeling able to or wanting to give back to the community or creating a better future for the community
	Personal motivations	Descriptions of why an individual is motivated to access new opportunities that does not include personal fulfillment (e.g., survival)
Work or School Conditions (10)- Factors that affect a person's ability to thrive, or not thrive within the work or school environment	Work-Life Balance	Mentions of balancing, or not balancing, work responsibilities and outside of work activities and/or responsibilities
	Pay	Mentions of actual or prospective financial compensation from employers
	Personal Fulfilment	Mentions of feeling, or lack of feeling, joy, purpose, or personal fulfillment in the job
	Growth and Leadership Opportunities	Mentions of having, or not having, professional opportunities to grow and lead others within an organization
	Health	Mentions of having, or not having, opportunities to be mentally, emotionally, and physically healthy ex. burnout,

		emotional cost, draining
	Immigration Documentation	Mentions of opportunities to access, or not access, documentation for immigration purposes
	Leadership	Descriptions of supportive, or unsupportive, leadership defined by those who see their employees as leaders who contribute meaningfully to the organization
	Colleagues	Mentions of coworkers, colleagues, and peers that have or have not supported the personal or professional growth of an individual and mentions of the positive or negative cultures they create
	Non-Pay Job Benefits	Mentions of having, or not having, job benefits like health insurance, paid time off, child/elderly care, flexible schedule (including WFH options), and retirement benefits
	Type of Institution	Mentions of either a specific type of institution such as minority serving institution (MSI), Hispanic serving institution (HSI), historically Black college or university (HBCU), or predominately white institution (PWI)
Culturally Affirming Environments (7)- Factors that foster a culturally affirming environment where individuals racial, linguistic, and cultural identities are affirmed	Inclusion	Descriptions of having a welcoming environment that is accepting of all racial/ethnic, sex/genders, sexual orientations, and different abled bodies.
	Discrimination	Descriptions of explicit individual level exclusion that includes but is not limited to microaggressions, tokenism, and alienation

	Inequity	Descriptions of systemic discrimination against a group
	Representation	Descriptions of having or not having colleagues, co-workers, and/or students that share similar identities or backgrounds.
	Diversity	Descriptions of a work environment with diverse identities and backgrounds.
	Cultural Authenticity	Descriptions of feeling free to be your full, authentic self without masking/filtering your cultural identity.
Interview Sections (4)- Answers to each one of the interview sections	Attrition/Challenges	Responses in response to participants being asked about attrition/challenges
	Supports/Assets	Responses in response to participants being asked about supports/assets
	Motivation/Recruitment	Responses in response to participants being asked about motivation/recruitment
	Rejuvenation	Code that encompasses responses to the rejuvenation questions on the protocol
	Persistence/Retention	Responses in response to participants being asked about persistence/retention