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*Loyola Marymount University*

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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

*Mamás Metidas: Empowering Latinx Spanish-Dominant Parents in Independent Schools*  
Through Culturally Responsive School Leadership

by

Silvia Salazar Rivera

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,  
Loyola Marymount University,  
in partial satisfaction of the requirement for the degree  
Doctor of Education

2024

*Mamás Metidas*: Empowering Latinx Spanish-Dominant Parents in Independent Schools  
Through Culturally Responsive School Leadership

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by

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This dissertation written by Silvia Salazar Rivera, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

27 November 2023

Date

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## **DEDICATION**

To my grandparents: *Papá Miguel* and *Mamá Tere*

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## ABSTRACT

*Mamás Metidas: Empowering Latinx Spanish-Dominant Parents in Independent Schools  
Through Culturally Responsive School Leadership*

by

Silvia Salazar Rivera

Latinx families, particularly those whose primary language is Spanish, are significantly underrepresented in independent schools nationwide and experience barriers to engaging in their children's education. Recognizing the crucial role of parent engagement in student academic success and socioemotional well-being, this research aimed to understand the unique challenges faced by Spanish-dominant parents in navigating the independent school contexts. Grounded in Khalifa et al.'s (2016) culturally responsive school leadership framework, the study intended to identify effective practices and strategies that facilitate Spanish-dominant parent engagement.

The narrative data, collected through both a group *plática* and individual interviews, offered valuable insights into the experiences of a group of Spanish-dominant *mamás*. The findings revealed three major themes: the importance of enhanced access to services and resources for meaningful engagement, the critical role of bilingual school contacts in bridging communication gaps, and the positive impact of cultivating a sense of belonging to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for Spanish-dominant families. Language access proved to be a vital factor in fostering parent engagement, enabling these parents to actively participate in their children's education through support with translation and interpretation services and other

resources in Spanish. Additionally, a bilingual family liaison provided them a portal of accessibility to the whole school. Lastly, opportunities for authentic and culturally sensitive involvement further enhanced their sense of belonging, contributing to a more inclusive and supportive school environment. This research highlighted the transformative potential of culturally responsive school leadership, emphasizing its role in empowering Spanish-dominant parents and facilitating their active involvement in independent schools.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

In the intricate tapestry of a child’s educational journey, active parent engagement emerges as a crucial factor influencing academic success—a concept supported by a robust body of research (Araque et al., 2017; Jimenez-Castellanos & Gonzalez, 2012; Kuru Cetin & Taskin, 2016; Martinez et al., 2013; MacPhee, 2021; Olivos, 2004; Sánchez et al., 2010; Vera et al., 2017; Walker, 2016). This active and committed engagement, extending from the formative preschool years to the pivotal high school period, is linked to significant enhancements in children's overall development and educational outcomes, as evidenced by research findings (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Importantly, as children progress from primary to secondary education, they require diverse forms of parental engagement and involvement to address their evolving needs (Hill & Tyson, 2009). Recognizing the significance of this engagement, it is essential to understand that expectations for appropriate parent-school interaction vary among parents. These variations are shaped by individual perspectives and decisions regarding when and how to engage, expressed explicitly or implicitly, influenced by the social groups to which they belong and their background (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

This study was centered on examining the parent engagement experiences of immigrant Latinx<sup>1</sup> Spanish-dominant families in an independent school context. A primary factor positively influencing the engagement of all parents was a clear understanding of the school’s expectations

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<sup>1</sup> The gender-neutral term Latinx is used in the study to refer to people of Latin American descent who identify as Latino/a/e or Hispanic unless they specify their gender.

(Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Existing literature also suggested parent participation was influenced by sociodemographic factors and the educational levels of parents (Hossain & Shipman, 2009). For Latinx parents, in particular, engagement was closely tied to their trust in the education system, often rooted in concerns that their children's needs are not being adequately addressed (Araque et al., 2017). When Latinx families enrolled their children in an independent school of their choice, they implicitly trusted that the school had their children's best interest at heart and provided them with enhanced academic opportunities. Nevertheless, these families encountered various challenges as they integrated their Latinx children into generally predominantly White, elite independent schools. As the researcher delved into the specific experiences of Latinx families in independent schools, it was essential to explore the unique challenges they face in navigating cultural, linguistic, and social differences in these educational settings.

Latinx students are significantly underrepresented in K–12 independent schools across the United States. The National Center for Education Statistics (2023) reported Latinx students accounted for 28% of K–12 enrollment in public schools nationwide in the fall of 2021. However, the landscape was markedly different in independent schools. According to the 2023 data from the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), Latinx/Hispanic students constituted a mere 5.8% of the student population across 1,272 member schools and 8.1% across 394 non-member schools. This disparity is noteworthy, particularly because Latinx individuals comprise the largest minority population in the United States and one of the fastest growing (Araque et al., 2017; García-Reid et al., 2015; Gilbert et al., 2017).

Projections from the Census Bureau indicated, by 2050, 31.9% of children in the United States will be Latinx, and 39% will be non-Hispanic White (National Association of Independent Schools [NAIS], 2016). As the racial and ethnic demographics continue to change in the country, it is reasonable to anticipate a potential impact on the diversity and enrollment patterns in independent schools. Currently, several factors contribute to the underrepresentation of Latinx students in independent schools, including socioeconomic factors, family traditions and expectations, and a lack of awareness among Latinx parents about independent schools as a viable option for their children (Cavanagh & López, 2004). The lack of understanding is even more pronounced among Spanish-dominant parents, for whom information about independent schools is not readily accessible in their primary language. Additionally, the high cost of an independent education can serve as a financial barrier, discouraging families from even applying. Previous research in higher education has identified financial support as one of the primary educational barriers Latinx students face (Arocho, 2017; Lunsford, 2012; Solorzano, 1993). Similarly, low-income Latinx families rely on financial assistance to be able to enroll their children in independent institutions. Moreover, due to the limited ethnic representation in the independent school community, Latinx families may approach the decision to send their children to an independent school with caution, as it may affect their children's sense of belonging in such an environment.

Independent schools affiliated with the NAIS organization are expected to create and sustain diverse, inclusive, equitable, and just school communities that are safe and welcoming for all constituents (NAIS, 2017). Member schools pledge to adhere to the organization's Principles of Good Practice (NAIS, 2017), which define the high standards and ethical conduct necessary



for establishing educational communities that align with NAIS’s core values of transparency, excellence, and inclusivity. These principles also emphasize the need for “strategic goals and objectives that promote diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice in the life of the school” (NAIS, 2017, p. 1). To successfully achieve this mission, schools must adopt equitable, culturally responsive, and inclusive practices. Transparent and effective school-parent communication is also a pivotal component in achieving these goals.

The setting for the original research detailed in this study was a K–12 independent school located in Los Angeles County, which will be referred to as The Village School to protect the privacy of participants. Founded over 50 years ago, the school community has prided itself on its progressive approach to education, leadership, and values. School leaders have been firmly committed to diversifying the student body and have worked to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for the school community. In recent years, The Village School leaders have taken proactive steps to increase the enrollment of K–12 Latinx students and promote a more inclusive environment for Latinx families.

At the time of the study, 46% of the student body at The Village School identified as non-Latinx White and 54% as students of color, significantly exceeding the 25.9% average across NAIS independent schools (NAIS, 2020). Latinx students comprised 7.1% of the student body, with one fourth of them having Spanish-dominant parents or caregivers. Although Spanish-dominant families represented a relatively small portion of the overall school community, they made up a significant portion of the Latinx demographic. These parents and caregivers faced unique challenges primarily associated with their linguistic differences. The school, however, offered interpretation services to families whose primary

language was Spanish and indicated so during enrollment and re-enrollment. Parents who self-identified as Spanish-dominant automatically became members of *Familias Unidas* [United Families], a Spanish-dominant parent affinity group designed to enhance communication between the school and these families and improve their access to the school.

To better support Latinx families, The Village School had established a position for a bilingual Latinx Family Liaison. This liaison played a crucial role in identifying the unique needs of Latinx students and their families and developing tailored programs for academic and socioemotional support. According to research, the presence of a Latinx family liaison has been instrumental in appropriately supporting Latinx students in independent schools and creating meaningful family engagement opportunities (Crea et al., 2015; Fraga, 2016).

Latinx individuals hold a strong sense of *familismo*, characterized by robust collectivist family values (Espinoza, 2010). *Familismo* encompasses a deep commitment to family, emphasizing close-knit relationships, mutual support, and shared responsibilities. Grounded in this cultural value, families expressed a desire to actively participate in their children's education and school experiences. Research indicated that providing resources and language services contributed to increased engagement among Spanish-dominant families and fostered a greater sense of belonging in a school community (Suhy, 2012).

To promote a welcoming school environment, a school must establish a structure that is inclusive of all students and their families, fostering two-way communication between home and school. Features of efficient home-school partnerships include regular meetings, newsletters, academic progress updates, addressing parent and student concerns, and involving parents in school decisions (Khalifa et al., 2015; 2016; Kuru Cetin & Taskin, 2016).

Elevating parent engagement brings numerous benefits to student academic success. Research has indicated heightened parental involvement correlates with higher grade point averages for Latinx students, regardless of their socioeconomic background (Araque et al., 2017; Gilbert et al., 2017). Additionally, schools benefit from fostering parent engagement, as it helps in determining and formulating effective strategies to support their students. Contrary to common assumptions that Latinx parents are less invested in their children's education, research has suggested sociocultural factors and trust in teachers significantly influence their engagement levels (Civil et al., 2008). Several studies with low-income, minoritized, immigrant families have shown the existence of a gap between parents' educational expectations and their actual experiences (Civil et al., 2008). This finding further highlights a pressing need for independent schools to prioritize transparency, accessibility, and linguistic inclusion for Latinx Spanish-dominant families.

The literature review delved more deeply into issues of establishing a welcoming school environment and elevating Latinx parent engagement, contextualizing their significance, and exploring strategies to create equitable and inclusive school environments, particularly for Spanish-dominant families. The study's central question underscored its focus on understanding these parents' unique needs and identifying effective practices for cultivating authentic parent-school partnerships and nurturing a welcoming environment for them.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Latinx students are underrepresented in independent schools, resulting in a lack of critical mass for Latinx families that can potentially lead to isolation, marginalization, and exclusion. Despite school efforts to foster inclusivity and enhance parent engagement, some Latinx parents

encounter challenges in actively participating in their children's education. Research has highlighted the significant impact of language barriers on the involvement of parents and caregivers whose primary language is Spanish (Giano et al., 2018; Gonzalez et al., 2015; Martinez et al., 2013; Vera et al., 2017). Compounding this issue, non-English speaking parents may be erroneously perceived by school leaders as operating from a cultural deficit (García-Reid et al., 2015; Quiñones & Kiyama, 2014). This misconception assumes parents do not prioritize their children's education, potentially resulting in students being disregarded or not receiving the necessary attention and support. Furthermore, this cultural deficit misconception overlooks the valuable cultural capital Spanish-dominant families bring to enrich the school community. This not only impacts the overall experience of these families but also prevents them from accessing the necessary resources to support their children's education.

Parents who feel excluded and poorly informed struggle to engage effectively in their parenting role, affecting collaboration with the school and teachers. Specific challenges include a lack of knowledge about the education system and difficulties comprehending the unique challenges their children encounter in school (Civil et al., 2008; García-Reid et al., 2015). Unfortunately, the voices of underrepresented Spanish-dominant parents often go unheard in independent schools, depriving them of the necessary support to benefit their children. Addressing these challenges requires not only language-sensitive practices but also a comprehensive understanding of the diverse needs and contributions of Spanish-dominant families in the school community.

To foster inclusive and welcoming communities for Latinx families, school leaders must make a deliberate effort to understand and accommodate both students and their families

(Cavanagh & López, 2004; NAIS, 2017). The NAIS Principles of Good Practice encourage member schools to ensure international families have access to the same information as other families (NAIS, 2017), indicating a need for language access. Notably, NAIS does not explicitly address language accessibility for non-English speaking families besides international families. The organization's website lacks statistics on language diversity or linguistic inclusion efforts in schools, emphasizing the need for data collection. This information can help schools break down barriers and provide equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive opportunities for engaging Spanish-dominant families.

Previous research has brought to light the ambiguity surrounding the roles of Latinx parents in their children's education and the concept of parent involvement (Quiñones & Kiyama, 2014). Schools can better serve their Latinx students by establishing more robust partnerships with their families and clarifying parent engagement expectations (Martinez et al., 2013; Torrez, 2004). Similarly, families must also communicate their expectations regarding their children's education. A healthy and effective school-family partnership and collaboration allow both parties to work together effectively to support the education of Latinx students.

### **Research Question**

The study was guided by the following question, aiming to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Spanish-dominant families concerning their active engagement in their children's education: What insights do Spanish-dominant parent narratives provide about their engagement, the impact of culturally responsive leadership practices, and their sense of belonging in an independent school context?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The aim of this study was to identify factors that impact Latinx Spanish-dominant family engagement—both positively and negatively—and to identify best practices for independent schools in fostering a sense of belonging for them. The study involved an analysis of culturally responsive practices, initiatives, and efforts that successfully engaged families in their children’s schooling and kept them well-informed of their children’s academic progress. Additionally, the research explored potential obstacles to appropriate family engagement. Through a narrative inquiry approach, this study amplified the voices of historically marginalized Latinx Spanish-dominant parents, ultimately aiming at creating and implementing resources and support structures for Latinx students to thrive in independent schools. The findings have the potential to drive changes in parent engagement practices in independent schools across the United States, foster stronger school–home relationships for Spanish-dominant families, and, most importantly, promote Latinx student academic achievement and socioemotional well-being.

### **Significance of the study**

Many K–12 independent schools across the United States have limited representation of Latinx families in their communities. Leaders of educational institutions bear the responsibility of providing equitable support to all students, ensuring their success and well-being, particularly in terms of socioemotional development. Although there is existing research on Latinx parent engagement in public and religious schools, there is a need for further investigation into the experiences of Latinx family engagement in independent schools. This study contributes to the body of scholarly work on Latinx parent engagement, focusing on immigrant Spanish-dominant families. The findings of this study serve as a valuable reference and resource for independent

schools seeking to enhance the inclusivity of Spanish-dominant families in their communities and improve their outreach efforts.

The Latinx student population in the United States is projected to grow in the coming years. This growth will bring about shifts in enrollment patterns in public and private schools nationwide. Therefore, it is imperative for current and future Latinx families in independent schools that leaders in these institutions become more culturally aware and responsive to the unique educational needs of these students and their families. Culturally informed practices and awareness of the diverse demographics in the school lead to stronger and more authentic home-school connections and partnerships. Spanish-dominant families may sometimes feel alienated from the dominant group in the school and perceive barriers to voicing their concerns or advocating for their children. This study offers insights into how a group of Spanish-dominant parents perceived their role in their independent school community and how they actively participated in it.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study was anchored in Khalifa et al.'s (2016) theoretical framework of culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL), which provided the foundational structure for the research. The four major tenets of CRSL are as follows: (a) critically self-reflect on leadership behaviors; (b) develop culturally responsive teachers; (c) promote a culturally responsive/inclusive school environment; and (d) engage students, parents, and indigenous contexts. This research focused on the third and fourth tenets. The third tenet stresses creating an inclusive and culturally responsive school environment and is a core component, ensuring every student feels valued and

respected in the school community. The fourth tenet encourages active engagement with parents, fostering meaningful connections and collaborative partnerships with the school community.

Khalifa et al. (2016) emphasized, “Culturally responsive school leaders are responsible for promoting a school climate inclusive of minoritized students, particularly those marginalized in most school contexts” (p. 1274). Furthermore, influential school leaders recognize the significance of acknowledging and respecting cultural differences among various groups. This awareness enables leaders to respond in culturally sensitive ways, addressing the unique needs of each group. School leaders are in a pivotal position to influence student success through the cultivation of strong relationships with both students and their families. They serve as catalysts for positive change, actively promoting equitable and inclusive environments that cultivate trust and a sense of community.

One impactful way school leaders can bring visibility to the richness of diverse cultures in their school community is by facilitating and encouraging parent participation (Khalifa et al., 2016). Culturally responsive practices to create an inclusive school environment involve establishing structures that accommodate students, parents, and caregivers by recognizing and honoring their native languages. This approach fosters a sense of belonging and inclusivity, making families feel visible and valued in the school community encouraging and motivating their active engagement in their children’s education and with the school. Strategies for engaging parents in innovative ways help build stronger family-school partnerships, further supporting student achievement (Khalifa et al., 2015, 2016).



## **Methodology**

This narrative inquiry qualitative study allowed for an in-depth exploration of the experiences and perceptions of immigrant Latinx Spanish-dominant parents and caregivers in an independent school. This methodology permitted parents to tell their stories and critically reflect on their experiences of parent engagement and involvement in their children's education. Through a collaboration between the participants and myself as the researcher, parents painted an authentic description of parent engagement experiences, challenges, and obstacles. Narrative inquiry was a relational methodology that allowed me, as the researcher, to draw on my own experiences as a source for understanding and explaining what parents meant in their stories.

### **Participants**

A purposive sample of seven participants, all of whom were mothers, agreed to participate in this study. The participants were immigrant Latinx Spanish-dominant parents and caregivers from The Village School with children in Grades K–12. All participants were members of *Familias Unidas* [United Families], a parent affinity group for parents who requested Spanish interpretation services at their children's school at the time of enrollment. Membership in this group was automatic upon requesting these language services. Two participants had at least one other child who was an alumnus of the school, and two others currently had two children enrolled at the school.

### **Data Collection**

To ensure a thorough understanding of participants' experiences, data collection for this study encompassed various components. Initially, each participant completed an online survey, providing preliminary insights into their demographic backgrounds and perspectives on

participation. Subsequently, participants engaged in a 90-minute group *plática* (a conversation in English), a culturally responsive discussion facilitated in Spanish. This *plática* provided a platform for participants to collectively share their experiences, stories, and insights, fostering validation and affirmation among peers and creating a supportive and collaborative space. Following the *plática*, participants took part in individual interviews, which lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and was conducted in Spanish. The individual interviews provided a more focused and in-depth exploration of each participant's distinct experiences and challenges in their children's school.

For flexibility and accessibility, a virtual platform was selected for both the *plática* and individual interviews, accommodating the participants' diverse preferences, work schedules, and transportation needs. Participants were, nonetheless, given the option to do the individual interviews in person. In addition to the collection of participant narratives, an analysis was performed on documents and visual materials relevant to the support structure for Spanish-dominant families at the Village School. This comprehensive approach aimed to capture a holistic understanding of the participants' experiences and support system in place.

### **Data Analysis**

The *plática* and the individual interviews were recorded on Zoom ([www.Zoom.us](http://www.Zoom.us)) and later transcribed using HappyScribe ([www.HappyScribe.com](http://www.HappyScribe.com)) online tools. The transcriptions formed the basis for a comprehensive data analysis. An exploratory study was then performed on the narrative data to identify common themes, patterns, and categories. The data were coded based on the themes identified in the literature review to refine the analysis further, allowing for a more structured examination. In addition, in vivo coding techniques were used to highlight

recurring words or phrases expressed by the parents during the *plática* and individual interviews. This approach allowed for a more flexible data analysis and helped identify key insights and perspectives.

### **Researcher Positionality**

Researcher self-awareness and understanding one's role, intersectionality of identities, and positionality in the research process are vital in qualitative studies. Complete objectivity and distance from the research subjects are often impossible, especially in narrative inquiry, which thrives on a relational methodology where stories are cocreated between the researcher and the participants (Clandinin, 2013). Hence, critical self-reflection on my positionality to the participants and their narratives was an integral part of the process of conducting this study.

I am a Latina woman, an immigrant from El Salvador, a native Spanish speaker, a first-generation college student, an educator, an administrator, and a school leader. I relocated to the United States at the age of 10 and completed my primary and secondary education in the public school system. I attended magnet schools in middle and high school. My mom's primary language was Spanish, and she had minimal English skills during that period. Although she could not help me with homework due to language barriers and her limited formal education, she actively participated in school events like open houses and back-to-school nights to meet my teachers and monitor my academic progress. I often served as the translator for school communications to assist her. Beyond language barriers, cultural differences also posed challenges for my mom in comprehending the school system and its expectations regarding parent engagement.

With 18 years of experience in the independent school sector, I have had a diverse career path. I began as a middle and high school Spanish teacher and gradually assumed roles in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). I started as a DEI coordinator and later became a DEI director. At the time of this study, I was Associate Director of Latinx Support and Outreach. In this role, I have functioned as a crucial resource and source of support for Latinx students. I have also acted as a bridge between Latinx families and the school while also advising and supporting the Latinx affinity groups on campus.

Latinx families have been notably underrepresented at my school. Drawing on my personal background as an immigrant, I have developed a keen awareness of the challenges related to adjusting, adapting, and assimilating into a dominant culture while trying to preserve one's authentic self. In my current role, I have gained insights into the needs of Latinx families at the school, developed programs for parent engagement, and improved school communication with the families. As a passionate advocate for Latinx students and their families, my mission has been to ensure they are recognized, heard, and valued in their full humanity and potential. This mission is deeply personal and directly connects with the narrative inquiry I conducted with Spanish-dominant parents at The Village School. As a liaison for Latinx families, my objective has been to contribute to the creation of a more equitable and inclusive school environment for these families. These values and motivations inspired me to pursue this research.

My unique understanding of the participant group proved to be a valuable asset in conducting qualitative research with this population. Here are some ways in which my personal and professional background were advantageous in the research process:

- Building trust: As a fellow Spanish native-speaker and immigrant, I built rapport and established trust with the participants. This facilitated open and honest communication during the *plática* and individual interviews.
- Cultural competence: My experience as an immigrant provided valuable insights into the participant group's cultural norms, values, and practices. This enabled me to ask more relevant questions and understand the nuances of the participants' experiences.
- Linguistic skills: As a native Spanish speaker, I could better understand the nuances of language and communication in the participant group. This was helpful in accurately interpreting the collected data and ensuring proper translation.
- Sensitivity to issues: My immigrant background provided me a personal understanding of some of the challenges and concerns faced by the participants. This heightened sensitivity ensured that the research process was conducted with due respect and ethical consideration.

Overall, my unique understanding of the participant group proved to be a valuable asset in conducting qualitative research with these Spanish-dominant parents. It was essential to use my personal experience and knowledge to approach the study with cultural competence and sensitivity, all while maintaining objectivity and avoiding any biases that could impact the research findings.

### **Assumptions**

My extensive experience supporting Latinx students and their families was the driving force behind the decision to do this study. I sought to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of Spanish-dominant families in the context of school engagement. The experience I

gained in working with this demographic empowered me to reject the deficit perspective that portrays Spanish-dominant families as disinterested in their children's education. Instead, I approached this study with an open mind and an open heart, dedicated to unveiling participants' personal stories, exploring their profound connections to the school, and understanding their dedication to supporting their children's academic achievement. I was intentional about ensuring the study was accessible to participants by adopting a flexible approach to the timing and manner of conducting interviews, all of which were conducted in Spanish. This strategy offered participants a platform to express their authentic voices and share their true experiences, ideally without apprehensions.

I made the following assumptions at the beginning of the study:

- Spanish-dominant families would feel comfortable discussing their experiences during interviews in a location of their choice and their native language.
- Spanish-dominant families in independent schools would predominantly express gratitude for the opportunity to have their children in private schools. Their stories would likely encompass positive experiences and address struggles and barriers related to parent engagement.
- Spanish-dominant families value their children's education and are interested in actively participating in it.
- Participants would draw connections between their own educational experience and upbringing and those of their children.

- Participants would be able to identify both successful and unsuccessful culturally responsive practices, strategies, and efforts aimed at engaging them in their children’s education.
- Spanish-dominant parent narratives would highlight the importance of language access and culturally responsive practices in fostering and nurturing their engagement.

### **Definitions of Terms**

The following definitions were relevant to this study:

*Academic success* referred to completing high school classes with a C+ or better, enrollment in honors classes, fulfillment of graduation requirements, and admission to a college or university.

*Families*, in the context of family engagement, included parents, caregivers, and legal guardians.

*Involvement* referred to active participation in school activities, events, and the greater school community, demonstrating inclusion in their children’s education and school environment.

*Latinx* is a gender-neutral term used in this study to include individuals of Latin American heritage or nationality who identify as Latino, Latina, Latine, or Hispanic.

*Parents*, as used in this study, encompassed legal guardians and caregivers. It was used interchangeably with the word “family” in the context of parent engagement.

*Parent engagement* referred to active involvement, interest, and participation in their children's education involving collaboration with teachers and partnership with the school to support their children.

*Spanish-dominant* referred to a person whose primary language is Spanish and who has limited verbal, writing, reading, and listening comprehension skills in English. In this study, it referred explicitly to parents who requested interpretation services in Spanish when they enrolled or reenrolled their children in their school.

### **Organization of the Study**

This dissertation is structured across five chapters. Chapter 1 presented the study's framework. Chapter 2 reviews academic literature that focuses on Latinx parent engagement in their children's education and school. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology employed in this narrative inquiry qualitative study. Chapter 4 presents the study's findings and analyzes the key themes associated with Spanish-dominant parent engagement in independent schools. Lastly, Chapter 5 offers a synthesis of the results and considers implications for future research.



## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study delved into the engagement levels of Latinx Spanish-dominant parents and caregivers in independent schools through a qualitative narrative inquiry. My primary objective was to identify effective culturally responsive leadership strategies and practices that foster an inclusive environment that aligns and embraces their cultural contexts. The literature review begins with an examination of parent engagement and its well-documented positive impact on student achievement. Subsequently, I explore the unique experiences of underrepresented Latinx parents whose primary language is Spanish. Although there was existing research addressing Latinx parent engagement, there remained a notable gap in the study of Spanish-dominant parent engagement, especially in the context of independent schools. Additional research was needed to fill this specific knowledge gap.

As previously presented in Chapter 1, the representation of Latinx students in National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) independent schools across the United States in 2023 was 5.8% (National Association of Independent Schools [NAIS], 2023). Despite the Latinx community being one of the fastest-growing ethnic groups in the United States (Araque et al., 2017; García-Reid et al., 2015; Gilbert et al., 2017), there has been little growth in the Latinx student population in independent schools, increasing by approximately 2% over the last decade (NAIS, 2012, 2023). The lack of critical mass among this demographic has contributed to their unique experience in terms of family engagement, especially those families whose dominant language is Spanish. This literature review presents key factors and barriers that positively and negatively impact Latinx parent engagement. Drawing on previous research, I aimed to highlight

culturally responsive practices that have successfully promoted and enhanced Latinx parent engagement in their children's schools.

Traditionally viewed as predominantly White and elite educational institutions, independent schools often lack significant representation of Latinx students. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2023), the K–12 enrollment of Latinx students in public schools across the country was 28% in 2021. This discrepancy is striking, considering Latinx people represent the largest minority population in the United States and are the fastest growing (Araque et al., 2017; García-Reid et al., 2015; Gilbert et al., 2017). The Brookings Institution reported a significant increase in the number of Latinx children in the United States, rising by 4.8 million from 2000 to 2010 (NAIS, 2016). In 2019, Latinx children, aged 18 and under, accounted for 26% of the nation's total child population. Based on census projections, 31.9% of U.S. children will be Latinx and 39% will be non-Hispanic White by 2050 (NAIS, 2016).

As racial and ethnic demographics in the country continue to evolve, there will probably be a shift in the racial makeup of student populations in independent schools. It is important to recognize Latinx people being an ethnic minority has not been the sole reason for their underrepresentation in independent schools. Efforts and initiatives in independent schools must be intentionally implemented to genuinely diversify their student bodies. This study revealed factors that help create an inclusive and culturally responsive school environment for Latinx families in an independent school. These findings offer valuable insights for establishing structures that better cater to the needs of Latinx families in independent schools, ultimately contributing to increased outreach and enrollment of Latinx students in the independent sector.

The literature review provides essential context for understanding the experiences of Latinx families in the educational system and the various ways through which they engage in their children's schooling. I delve into the importance of family engagement, offering insights into what effective engagement entails; the expectations regarding school and family involvement; and potential barriers that can hinder this engagement. I also explore research that concentrates on the specific challenges encountered by Latinx families, with a particular focus on language accessibility issues. I also highlight the schools' responsibility to promote parent engagement through culturally responsive approaches.

### **Family Engagement**

Family engagement encompasses various elements, including family responsiveness, placing a high value on education, active participation in parent-teacher conferences, proactive communication with teachers, and volunteering (Arce, 2019). Moreover, family engagement involves establishing strong two-way communication between families and schools, strengthened through regular attendance at school meetings; staying informed via school newsletters; remaining updated on their children's academic progress; and appropriately engaging in decision-making processes that impact students (Khalifa et al., 2015, 2016; Kuru Cetin & Taskin, 2016). In the context of this study, this was the working definition of family engagement. It is worth highlighting one of the primary challenges faced by both school leaders and families concerning family engagement pertains to the existence of diverse perceptions regarding what engagement entails and a lack of clarity regarding parent expectations (Arce, 2019; Khalifa, 2015; Liang et al., 2020). For example, Liang et al. (2020) showed, in a group of mothers of pre-K children, the definition of parent engagement varied significantly from parents with

children in higher grades. Some mothers interpreted engagement as actively being in their child's classroom helping the teacher, dropping off their child at school, or spending quality time at home with the child. Liang et al. (2020) demonstrated the importance of defining and communicating clear school expectations for parent engagement that are appropriate to each institution and student grade level.

Extensive research has revealed family engagement is highly beneficial for student learning and academic achievement regardless of socioeconomic status and cultural, linguistic, and educational background (Araque et al., 2017; Arce, 2019; García-Reid et al., 2015; Jimenez-Castellanos & Gonzalez, 2012; Kuru Cetin & Taskin, 2016; Lawson & Alameda-Lawson, 2012; MacPhee, 2021; Martinez et al., 2013; Olivos, 2004; Sánchez et al., 2010; Vera et al., 2017; Walker, 2016; Zhang et al., 2011). As Vera et al. (2017) found, “Regardless of age, children with more involved parents tend to have higher attendance, achievement levels, and more positive attitudes toward school than children whose parents are less involved” (p. 1). Research by Vera et al. (2017) and Walker (2016) highlighted the significance of K–12 schools examining and considering various methods to bolster parental engagement in both school-based and home-based settings. Although Zhang et al.'s (2011) study showed parent participation in school activities may or may not influence student achievement, it underscored the positive impact of home-based participation on their children's academic achievement. The literature also suggested successful and inclusive family engagement is pivotal for making schools more equitable, collaborative, and culturally responsive (Auerbach, 2009) to diverse families.

## **Latinx Families**

As previously suggested, Latinx family engagement benefits student achievement. Studies have shown persistent parental support and engagement can result in a higher grade point average and higher math and reading achievement among Latinx students (Araque et al., 2017). Unfortunately, findings have also indicated some Latinx families lack knowledge of the education system and struggle to find ways to appropriately get involved in their children's education. It was difficult for parents to provide the appropriate help if they did not understand or were fully aware of the challenges their children were encountering in their schools (García-Reid et al., 2015). Araque et al. (2017) conducted a pilot study with 68 parents of Latinx, low-income, moderate to low academic achievement level students, to evaluate the effectiveness of parent education. The study examined the impact of The 10 Education Commandments for Parents program on parent engagement. This program was a 33-page parent guide developed by the Latino Educational Attainment (LEA) Initiative in Orange County, last updated in 2017, with the objective of enhancing parental involvement and support in education (as cited in Araque et al., 2017). The study assessed parent knowledge about their children's education, provided them guidance on how to support their children, and addressed educational outcomes. All program materials were available in various languages to improve parent accessibility. The results of the study showed an increase in parent engagement in the school and in their children's academic performance. For example, students whose parents participated in the training showed improvement in math, language arts, and science.

Unfortunately, family engagement for Latinx families has often been interpreted from a deficit perspective (Olivos, 2004; 2009; Valencia & Black, 2002). Latinx parents and guardians

have been perceived as not valuing education, being uneducated and poor, and lacking parenting skills (Jimenez-Castellanos & Gonzalez, 2012). As a result, some school leaders view parent engagement as a way to “fix” Latinx parents and to teach them the “correct” skills to support their children (Araque et al., 2017) instead of being intentional about offering culturally responsive opportunities to effectively engage this group. Jimenez-Castellanos and Gonzalez’s (2012) study with a purposive sample of Latinx immigrant fathers argued presenting Latinx parents as not caring about their children’s education invalidated the fact that they did care about their children’s education. More intentional research needs to be done to gain a better understanding of the cultural differences and richness among Latinx families and the cultural wealth they bring to their children’s schools.

### **Spanish-Dominant Families**

Past studies have shown English language fluency enables parents to be better informed about what is going on at their children’s school, understand their children’s academic progress, communicate with teachers or school administrators, and advocate for their children. Conversely, Spanish-speaking immigrant parents generally struggle to navigate their children’s school system (Gilbert et al., 2017). Previous research has indicated some school leaders have held a deficit-based perception of Spanish-dominant parents (García-Reid et al., 2015; Quiñones & Kiyama, 2014). This perception has prevented school leaders from actively engaging this demographic, often assuming the parents were disinterested in their children’s education.

Failing to recognize the issue of low parent engagement in immigrant Latinx families has prevented school leaders from addressing the root causes of the differences in engagement. This failure has included school leaders not engaging Spanish-dominant parents in their native

language, making it difficult for families to provide appropriate support to their children (García-Reid et al., 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016). The literature highlighted that most school communication occurred in English, presenting a barrier for Spanish-dominant families to engage in academic discussions about their children or stay well-informed about their children's progress in classes (Gilbert et al., 2017).

Vera et al. (2017) surveyed 329 Latinx immigrant parents with English learner (EL) children in Catholic schools to identify factors influencing or inhibiting parent engagement. In this specific study, students experienced language barriers, prompting parents to dedicate more effort to home-based engagement. Parents acknowledged they were not able to rely on their children for clarification of school communication. Challenges in school engagement included:

- negative attitudes from staff and parents,
- lack of English proficiency, and
- work responsibilities conflicting with school programming.

Regarding home-based engagement, parents

- engaged their children in conversations about the importance of education,
- inquired into what was happening at school,
- checked that their children were completing their homework, and
- established a supportive structure at home for their children's educational experience.

(Vera et al., 2017).

## **Barriers**

The literature has supported the notion that schools bear the responsibility of finding ways to connect, engage, and involve Latinx parents in their children's academic progress while

mitigating obstacles (García-Reid et al., 2015). Notably, individual, social, and structural barriers have been shown to influence Latinx family engagement. For instance, studies have revealed, at times, Latinx parents developed distrust toward the school system, fearing being perceived as undeserving (Araque et al., 2017). On the other hand, some Latinx parents have placed full trust in teachers, particularly if they had limited formal education themselves, resulting in a perceived lack of agency in their children’s education (Gonzalez et al., 2015, Sánchez, 2010). This dilemma can leave parents feeling constrained even when desiring greater involvement. Prior research, as noted by O’Donnell and Kirkner (2014), has indicated, as Latinx children grew older, parents became culturally less inclined to contact teachers, trusting the school to handle educational matters (Mapp, 2003; Ramirez, 2003). This distancing was also a result of limited parental educational background, leaving parents feeling uncertain about advising their own children on certain matters (Gonzalez et al., 2015; Sánchez, 2010).

### ***Language Access***

Research has shown language barriers can significantly affect the level of involvement of Spanish-dominant families in their children’s schooling (Giano et al., 2018; Gonzalez et al., 2015; Joseph et al., 2017; Martinez et al., 2013; Vera et al., 2017). Gonzalez et al. (2015) surveyed Spanish-speaking immigrant parents who had children in Grades 8–12 where interpreters were used to communicate with their children’s schools. The study included two focus groups, and both facilitations were conducted in Spanish. Among the findings, parents indicated their status as English learners limited their communications with the school and they felt “lost” because there were no administrators who could communicate with them in Spanish. When linguistic differences were not supported by the school, it made it difficult for families to



be in partnership with the school (Arce, 2019). The language barrier also posed difficulty in accessing general information from the school. This resulted in parents feeling isolated and excluded from their children's school.

In Martinez et al.'s (2013) study, a parent shared how uncomfortable it was for them to attend meetings conducted in English and being unable to engage appropriately. Some parents said they preferred school communication to reach them by paper and by phone instead. Martinez et al. cited the importance of school programming that accommodated parental language needs and the importance of having interpreters for meetings, school events, and school visits (Brown & Santiago, 2016). Clear communication and access to information about their children's academic progress is fundamental for Latinx Spanish-dominant parents to be able to appropriately support their children.

### ***Parent Immigration Status***

When examining the participation of Spanish-dominant families, it is important to consider their immigration status and relevant possible obstacles. Giano et al. (2018) surveyed 1,832 seventh-grade students from 12 middle schools—661 of whom were Latinx—and found 51% of students identified as having at least one undocumented parent. Giano et al. concluded parent legal immigration status posed limitations on their ability to become actively involved in their children's academics, and some of the concerns had to do with parent safety and fear of family separation.

Jimenez-Castellanos and Gonzalez (2012) examined the impact of microaggressions on the engagement of undocumented Latinx fathers and suggested "institutional racism, discrimination, and the public's perceptions of immigrants also needed to be carefully

contemplated when looking at the dynamics of involvement among undocumented Latino immigrant fathers” (p. 207). Although it is important to consider this issue as a possible barrier, Jimenez-Castellanos and Gonzalez also advised not to make general assumptions about immigrant parents being undocumented. School leaders who make this assumption without parents contributing the information themselves could, in turn, create a hostile environment for them.

### ***Socioeconomic Status***

Kuru Cetin and Taskin (2016) found parental involvement in general, in both public and private schools, was affected by the parent’s socioeconomic status. Kuru Cetin and Taskin’s (2016) research indicated parents with “a good socio-economic status were more willing and active in the procedure of participating in the process of education” (p. 106). The study emphasized the need to raise awareness among low-income parents regarding the importance of their involvement and highlighted the importance of providing parents with opportunities to participate actively. In agreement, Jimenez-Castellanos and Gonzalez’s (2012) identified low income and limited education as factors that negatively influenced family involvement. Contrary to these findings, Walker’s (2016) study suggested socioeconomic status was a weak predictor of parent involvement. Jimenez-Castellanos and Gonzalez also cautioned against perpetuating stereotypes that reinforce a deficit-thinking perspective regarding Latinx family participation. Although it is crucial to consider various factors influencing parental involvement, it is equally important to avoid making general assumptions about a family’s socioeconomic situation or conditions.

### *Additional Factors and Circumstances*

Various factors have been identified as influential in Latinx parent engagement. These factors have encompassed cultural differences, the richness of Latinx customs, religion, family values, finances, transportation, and the school's hidden culture (Brown & Santiago, 2016). Misunderstandings of U.S. cultural norms have contributed to parents holding diverse ideas about their roles in their children's education (Brown & Santiago, 2016; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014; Quiñones & Kiyama, 2014).

A significant obstacle has been parents' lack of time for engagement, a challenge linked to factors such as job schedules, having multiple jobs, and insufficient childcare options (Gonzalez et al., 2015). This time constraint has been closely associated with financial considerations. Research also has revealed misunderstandings about the concept of parental involvement and the parent's role (Quiñones & Kiyama, 2014). School leaders have been able to better support their Latinx students by communicating their expectations to the families to avoid confusion about the level of engagement that was expected from them (Martinez et al., 2013; Torrez, 2004). Additionally, schools have also benefited from communicating what the school's role was in supporting student learning (Martinez et al., 2013; Torrez, 2004).

Joseph et al. (2017) found some schools have implemented strategies to enhance Latinx parent engagement, including parent training sessions and volunteer opportunities aimed at helping parents comprehend ways to participate actively in their children's education, both at home and school. According to Joseph et al., some Latinx families indicated their involvement was restricted due to a lack of opportunities but also by an unwelcoming school environment. Joseph et al. concluded, to improve Latinx parent engagement, a school needed to provide clear

and constant invitations to engage families in different ways and offer flexible formats for their participation that were mindful of cultural differences and family situations. According to O'Donnell and Kirkner (2014), additional methods for encouraging Latinx parent engagement at school include providing childcare, transportation, translation and interpretation, food, a flexible schedule, and culturally appropriate programs. O'Donnell and Kirkner further suggested well-designed programs can encourage new immigrants or Spanish-dominant families to increase their involvement.

### **Culturally Responsive School Leadership**

This study was grounded in the third and fourth tenets of Khalifa et al.'s (2016) culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) framework. Tenet 3 is to promote a culturally responsive/inclusive school environment, and Tenet 4 is to engage students, parents, and indigenous contexts. These tenets underscore the capacity and responsibility of school leaders to involve families in culturally responsive ways. Cultural responsiveness is a culturally validating and affirming process that uses cultural knowledge, previous experiences, and perspectives from ethnically diverse groups to enhance interactions, making them more relevant and impactful (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). CRSL suggests school leaders engage in critical self-reflection to create meaningful, positive relationships with the community (Khalifa et al., 2016). The community serves as an invaluable source of information that aids in fostering a positive understanding of families. It is imperative to dispel any deficit perceptions of families or students. The rationale behind selecting this theoretical framework stemmed from its dedicated focus on family engagement and inclusive environments approached through a culturally responsive lens.

Culturally responsive school leaders emerge as advocates for social justice, demonstrating unwavering commitment to principles of inclusion, equity, and advocacy (Khalifa et al., 2016). Moreover, educational leaders bear the responsibility of cultivating an inclusive school environment for underrepresented and marginalized families in the school context. Given its profound emphasis on promoting parent engagement through culturally responsive strategies, this theoretical framework was deemed the most pertinent for examining the narratives of immigrant Latinx Spanish-dominant families concerning their engagement in their children's schooling.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The literature review highlighted various factors that can impact Latinx parent engagement, with limited attention to family engagement in independent schools. Independent schools, often characterized by predominantly White demographics and increasing tuition fees, primarily enroll White students from high-income families. Despite this general trend, variations may exist among various independent schools. Immigrant Spanish-dominant families, who typically represent a small portion of the population in independent schools, often rely on school financial assistance (National Association of Independent Schools [NAIS], 2016). In this study, I employed a narrative inquiry approach to explore and examine the experiences of a group of Spanish-dominant parents and caregivers in an independent school. This method allowed for an in-depth exploration of contextual factors that shape parent experiences in their efforts to be involved in their children's education.

Examining personal experiences through a culturally responsive lens allowed findings from this study to provide a window into Latinx family cultural differences and the challenges they experience engaging fully and authentically in their children's education. The narrative inquiry aimed to find patterns and common themes that can guide independent school leaders in creating a more inclusive and equitable school environment for Latinx Spanish-dominant families. As the researcher, I leveraged my positionality and expertise as a Latinx family liaison to examine and analyze Spanish-dominant family experiences, identify needs and obstacles, and highlight successful school practices. Through this study, I sought to contribute valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on Latinx parent engagement in the context of independent schools.

Chapter 3 delineates key components of the study, including the research question, methodology, site context, participant selection, procedure, analysis methods, and limitations and delimitations. As the researcher, I drew upon my 17 years of experience in independent schools and my role as a Latinx family liaison to thoroughly examine and analyze the experiences of Spanish-dominant families. This involved identifying their needs and obstacles and highlighting successful school practices in Latinx parent engagement.

### **Research Question**

The following research question guided this study: What insights do Spanish-dominant parent narratives provide about their engagement, the impact of culturally responsive leadership practices, and their sense of belonging in an independent school context?

### **Research Design**

In this educational research, I used narrative inquiry methodology to gain an understanding of the lived experiences and perspectives of Spanish-dominant parents at The Village School. Narrative inquiry is a method that treats an individual's experiences as stories (Clandinin, 2013, 2019), allowing for a more nuanced and complex understanding of their lives. The narrative inquiry process is both involved and intensive, with relationships at its core, and it encourages critical self-reflection by both the researcher and participants. It is an effective method for understanding and inquiring narratively about a phenomenon. Narrative inquiry is grounded in the concept that we exist in and through stories (Clandinin, 2013, 2019). Clandinin (2019) highlighted the importance of relational ethics in engaging in narrative inquiry. There are no objective inquirers in this approach. In narrative inquiry, the researcher becomes integrated

into the lives of the participants and, in turn, participants become woven into the researcher's experiences (Clandinin, 2019).

It is important to acknowledge, in narrative inquiry, a person's story, even if faithful to their experience, still represents a selective emphasis of that experience (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Nonetheless, this was a strong approach for gathering the stories of Spanish-dominant families at The Village School. It allowed for a deep exploration of participants' unique perspectives and experiences rather than reducing their experiences to quantifiable data. Overall, narrative inquiry offered a way to expose the rich and complex experiences of participants and to gain insights into their perspectives and needs.

Spanish-dominant families answered questions regarding their active engagement in their children's education and the impact of culturally responsive parent engagement practices on their sense of belonging. In addition to oral narratives, the study included analysis of various artifacts (i.e., school-home communication, teacher-parent emails, meeting agendas, and parent videos). These artifacts were crucial in providing additional context and perspectives on the engagement and sense of belonging of Spanish-dominant families. The purpose of the study was to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the reality of Spanish-dominant families in the independent school sector. This understanding can inform improvements in engagement practices tailored to this marginalized demographic, ultimately supporting the success of Latinx students.

### **Research Site Context**

The study was conducted at The Village School, a pseudonym for a K-12 independent school located in Los Angeles County with approximately 1,200 students and a faculty of



around 150. Established over 50 years ago, the school has had a rich history and has been renowned for its progressive educational philosophy placing emphasis on community, justice, and activism. The school's educational approach is to teach to the individual student, guiding them to reach their full potential.

The Village School's commitment to diversity has been evident in its relatively diverse student body compared to similar schools in the area. At the time of this study, 46% of the student body identified as non-Latinx White, and 54% were students of color. This diversity was notably higher than the national average for independent schools in the United States, which stood at 28% of students of color (NAIS, 2020). Single-identity K–12 Latinx students made up 7.1% of the student body, with approximately 26% of them coming from Spanish-dominant families, each student considered individually even if they had the same parents. This group of students represented 1.8% of the overall K–12 student body at the school and, although small, significantly constituted one fourth of the Latinx students at the school.

The Village School has actively fostered connections through affinity groups, like *Familias Unidas*. Their affinity groups have provided a dedicated space for students or parents of a shared marginalized identity to come together, connect, build critical mass, and support each other. Families whose primary language is Spanish can request interpretation services when enrolling their children. This is how the affinity group of Spanish-dominant parents and caregivers automatically become part of *Familias Unidas*.

In response to the needs of the Latinx community, The Village School initiated a focused effort to enhance support for Latinx students back in 2021. As part of this initiative, school leaders established a position for a bilingual Latinx family liaison. The school also

created a parent-led, bilingual, Latinx family affinity group. These additions were made to the Latinx student affinity groups established a few years prior. These changes were implemented strategically and with a strong commitment to creating a more equitable and inclusive school environment for Latinx students and their families at the school, which aligned with the broader mission and values of the school.

### **Participants**

This study employed purposive sampling focusing on gaining depth rather than breadth of understanding (Hays & Singh, 2012) of the participants' firsthand experience and knowledge relevant to parent engagement in an independent school. The participant group consisted of Latinx parents and caregivers whose primary language was Spanish and whose children attended The Village School. Parents who requested interpretation services during enrollment or re-enrollment automatically joined *Familias Unidas*, the school's Spanish-dominant family affinity group. Although participation in the group's monthly meetings and other group activities was optional, 19 K–12 families were part of *Familias Unidas*. My aim in the study was for one third of the Spanish-dominant families to participate, ensuring diverse representation. Some of the parents had multiple children enrolled in various divisions (i.e., elementary, middle, or upper school). A few even had children who had previously graduated from The Village School.

Seven participants actively participated in the study, all of whom were mothers. To emphasize their dominance of the Spanish language and to respect their cultural identity, the group of Spanish-dominant participants was referred to as *mamás* in the context of the study. Although some *mamás* could understand the basics of spoken English, they often encountered challenges when attempting to speak or write clearly and comfortably. In some cases,

participants felt capable of basic spoken communication with some grammar mistakes but still preferred school communication in Spanish as it was their first language.

The recruitment process for this study engaged Spanish-dominant parents and caregivers who were part of the Spanish-dominant affinity group, *Familias Unidas*, at The Village School. Nineteen such families received email invitations written in Spanish, along with a comprehensive description of the study's purpose and intent. This initial contact served to inform potential participants about the research. Potential participants were informed their participation was voluntary. In addition to the email invitations, personal phone calls were made to a subset of Spanish-dominant parents, particularly those recommended by The Village School's Latinx family liaison, who had expressed a preference for phone communication over email.

From this recruitment effort, a total of seven mothers formed the study's participant group. The process included individuals who were willing to openly share their experiences related to their engagement and participation in their children's education and with the school, regardless of their attendance at the *Familias Unidas* monthly meetings. Most participants were proficient in various communication methods, including email, Zoom video conferencing, and online surveys.

I proactively addressed technological challenges faced by participants during the recruitment phase. Although three parents initially expressed difficulty with email or Zoom, I made adjustments to ensure inclusivity and accessibility. For instance, one parent attempted to join the initial Zoom *plática* with help from their child but, due to unforeseen family circumstances, was unable to join on the scheduled day, impeding their participation. Despite these specific challenges, those who were interested and able to participate successfully engaged

in the study. Additionally, efforts to conduct alternative forms of interviews, such as phone or in-person, were made with flexibility to accommodate different preferences and circumstances. Participants who faced barriers related to email and Zoom accessibility received support to ensure their inclusion in the study.

### **Data Collection**

Data for this study were gathered through a multifaceted approach, including (a) a brief online survey, (b) a group *plática* on Zoom, and (c) individual semistructured interviews that could be in-person or virtual. The survey, designed to gather essential demographic information, was administered to all participants before the *plática*. Notably, the *plática* and individual interviews were conducted exclusively in Spanish, ensuring a comprehensive and accurate portrayal of participants' experiences and perspectives.

The group *plática* and the individual interviews, whether conducted in person or virtually, were recorded using the Zoom platform. This recording facilitated the transcription and translation processes. Throughout the data collection phase, participants were provided with the option to close their cameras, respecting their preferences for visual participation.

### **Documents, Visual Materials, and Artifacts**

The research delved into various documents, visual materials, and artifacts sourced from The Village School to gain insights into the support system they had established for Spanish-dominant families. This comprehensive analysis encompassed a range of items, including the following:

- School website—Examination of the school's website to identify elements that contribute to the support of Spanish-dominant families;

- *Familias Unidas* documents—Review of the group’s monthly meeting agendas and related notes from workshops specially tailored to this group;
- Communication protocols—Review of the established protocols enabling Spanish-dominant parents to access interpretation and translation services for effective communication with teachers and administrators. Similarly, the study explored the protocols for faculty and administrators to access these services when communicating with Spanish-dominant families; and
- Visual materials—Analysis of visual materials (e.g., an admissions video presented in Spanish and a 15-minute video featuring a parent of *Familias Unidas* reflecting on their experiences at the school).

## **Survey**

I invited participants to fill out a brief online survey aimed at gathering demographic information and measuring participant engagement in their children’s education, involvement in the school, and their sense of belonging. The survey employed a 5-point Likert-scale with response options ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The survey was administered in Spanish to align with the participant’s primary language (see Appendix A for the survey questions in English and Appendix B for the Spanish version). The information gathered through the survey contextualized the insights gained through the *plática* and the individual interviews.

## **Group *Plática***

The *plática* methodology played a central role in this study. *Plática*, meaning “chat” or “talk” in English, is a culturally relevant approach to sharing and witnessing stories in a group setting. This approach allowed the participants and me to connect in a familial way and

encouraged candid sharing of experiences (Fierros & Delgado Bernal, 2016). This format also fostered a collective dialogue and facilitated a free, open exchange of perspectives. The main goal of the group *plática* was for participants to identify common successes and challenges while validating and affirming each other's experiences. All participants joined in a 90-minute group *plática* on Zoom (see Appendix C for the group *plática* semistructured protocol in English and Appendix D for its Spanish translation).

### **Individual Semistructured Interviews**

These individual semistructured interviews served as a pivotal method for gathering rich, first-hand narratives from participants, contributing to a comprehensive exploration of their experiences and insights related to family engagement at the school. The information gathered during these interviews was an essential component of this research study, offering valuable perspectives from participants. Each of the seven participants engaged in an individual semistructured interview lasting between 30 and 60 minutes. The primary aim of these interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the unique experiences and perspectives of participants concerning family engagement at The Village School.

To ensure flexibility and accessibility, interviews were conducted either via Zoom or in person, based on the participants' preferences and schedules. This approach sought to accommodate the diverse needs and circumstances of the participants. The interview protocol was translated into Spanish to ensure participants could fully and comfortably engage in the interview process (see Appendix E and Appendix F for the English and Spanish versions of the interview protocol).

## Data Analysis

The data analysis process for this study began with creating transcripts of the *plática* and individual interviews using HappyScribe software. These transcriptions were the foundational dataset for an in-depth analysis of the participants' narratives. The main objective of the analysis was to identify recurring themes, patterns, and categories in the narrative data. This approach aimed to offer insights into the participants' experiences and perspectives regarding parent engagement and culturally responsive school leadership practices. The coding process involved both thematic coding, informed by the literature review, and in vivo coding, using participants' own words and phrases as codes.

The qualitative data, including the group *plática* and individual interviews, underwent analysis and coding to identify emergent themes. I examined the group *plática* data for division or grade-relevant information and effective engagement practices. Additionally, I extracted valuable suggestions for enhancing parent engagement. Similarly, I analyzed individual interview narratives for common themes, shared experiences, and unique challenges faced by Spanish-dominant parents.

To organize the data systematically, I established categories that corresponded to the major themes identified. Each category provided a framework for organizing related quotes and content, facilitating a clear and structured analysis. Salient quotes were extracted in each category to support and illustrate participants' experiences and perspectives. In this process, verbal fillers such as "umms," extended pauses, and consecutively repeated words were removed to enhance readability and focus on the content of participants' statements, ensuring the *mamás'* responses were accurately represented in the context of the study. Subsequently, these quotes

were then translated into English for inclusion in the findings in Chapter 4. The translations were completed using online tools, which I subsequently reviewed and edited, relying on my background as a Spanish teacher. The analytical process also involved reviewing relevant documents and artifacts, ensuring the consideration of all available data sources. My aim in this comprehensive approach to data analysis was to enhance the reliability and strength of the study's results, therefore improving the quality of the research findings.

### **Limitations**

This study had several limitations. The use of a small purposive sample consisting exclusively of Latinx Spanish-dominant parents from a single independent school limited the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, the study's focus on this specific demographic and geographic location may limit the applicability of the research to more diverse contexts. Another limitation stemmed from the fact that most participants currently had children in the upper school (i.e., high school), resulting in a greater emphasis on their experiences compared to those of elementary school parents.

This study also presented limitations associated with self-reported data collected through the demographic survey. Although participants were assured of the anonymity of their responses, some participants may not have felt comfortable addressing certain questions. Despite the semistructured interviews, which allowed participants to share their stories authentically and openly, this approach introduced limitations as the data relied on individual recollections and how participants chose to retell their stories.

It is also crucial to note the gender imbalance among participants; all were mothers. This disparity may have influenced the comprehensiveness of the insights provided, as I did not



capture the perspectives of fathers in the Latinx Spanish-dominant parent community. Lastly, as all the interviews were conducted in Spanish and variations exist in Spanish dialects, it is possible some information and idiomatic expressions were altered or lost in translation. Recognizing these limitations provides a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and potential effects of this research.

### **Delimitations**

The delimitations of this study outlined its boundaries and focus, providing clarity about the context of the research. The study was specifically delimited to Latinx Spanish-dominant parents and caregivers from a single independent school. This intentional focus aimed to identify patterns in this specific demographic. The study was confined to a specific independent school to gain a better understanding of the resources and support structure it has and learn how Spanish-dominant parents access or prioritize them. Although this specificity limited the generalizability of findings, it allows for more precise comparisons of participants' experiences and perspectives.

### **Summary**

In summary, Chapter 3 outlined the research methodology used to investigate culturally responsive practices for engaging Spanish-dominant parents in the independent school context. My aim, through this study, was to collect and explore the unique experiences of Spanish-dominant parents. The research question aligned with Khalifa et al.'s (2016) CRSL framework. The narrative inquiry design proved to be the most effective approach for capturing the stories and perspectives of the Spanish-dominant parents who participated in the study. Participants engaged in an online survey, a group *plática*, and individual interviews. In Chapter 4, I delve

more deeply into the experiences, offering profound insights into the challenges and successes experienced by Spanish-dominant parents and caregivers in independent schools.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

As highlighted in Chapter 2, the engagement and involvement of families are crucial for students' educational success and overall well-being. The primary objective of this qualitative study was to identify and assess culturally responsive leadership practices in independent schools that promote inclusivity and engagement for Spanish-dominant families. Through the study, I aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of Latinx Spanish-dominant families in independent schools, with the overarching goal of fostering and supporting their active engagement in their children's education. I prioritized the perspectives of the target demographic—the Spanish-dominant parents—ensuring a more relevant and meaningful assessment of the practices.

Participants were parents at The Village School, an independent K–12 school in Los Angeles County. Notably, all participants who agreed to participate in this study were mothers. In the research context and in recognition of the primary language spoken by this specific group of mothers, I referred to them interchangeably as Spanish-dominant *mamás* in the findings. Latinx parents represent a small demographic in independent schools nationwide, and even fewer are parents whose primary language is Spanish. The *mamás*' direct quotes are presented in the original Spanish, followed by English translations, to amplify their authentic voices.

This study was framed using Khalifa et al.'s (2016) theory of culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL), specifically focusing on the third and fourth tenets. These principles highlight the obligation of school leaders to cultivate a school environment that is both inclusive and responsive to the diverse cultural backgrounds of students and their parents. The theory

stresses the importance of actively respecting and valuing cultural diversity and advocates for efforts to create a school environment where historically marginalized students and their families can thrive. To achieve this, CRSL suggests school leaders understand the cultural diversity in the school community and strive to establish a welcoming and respectful environment, ensuring marginalized families of color feel seen, heard, respected, and valued. Recognizing the role of parents, it is necessary to consider their needs, given their involvement and engagement play a crucial role in supporting student success. The following research question guided the study: What insights do Spanish-dominant parent narratives provide into their engagement, the impact of culturally responsive leadership practices, and family sense of belonging in an independent school context?

The conversations, both in the group *plática* and individual interviews, delved into specific challenges and successes participants experienced in their children's school. These discussions served to identify factors that hindered their engagement and involvement. Conversations also revealed how this group of *mamás* navigated their children's independent school education, offering insights into their overall sense of belonging in the school community.

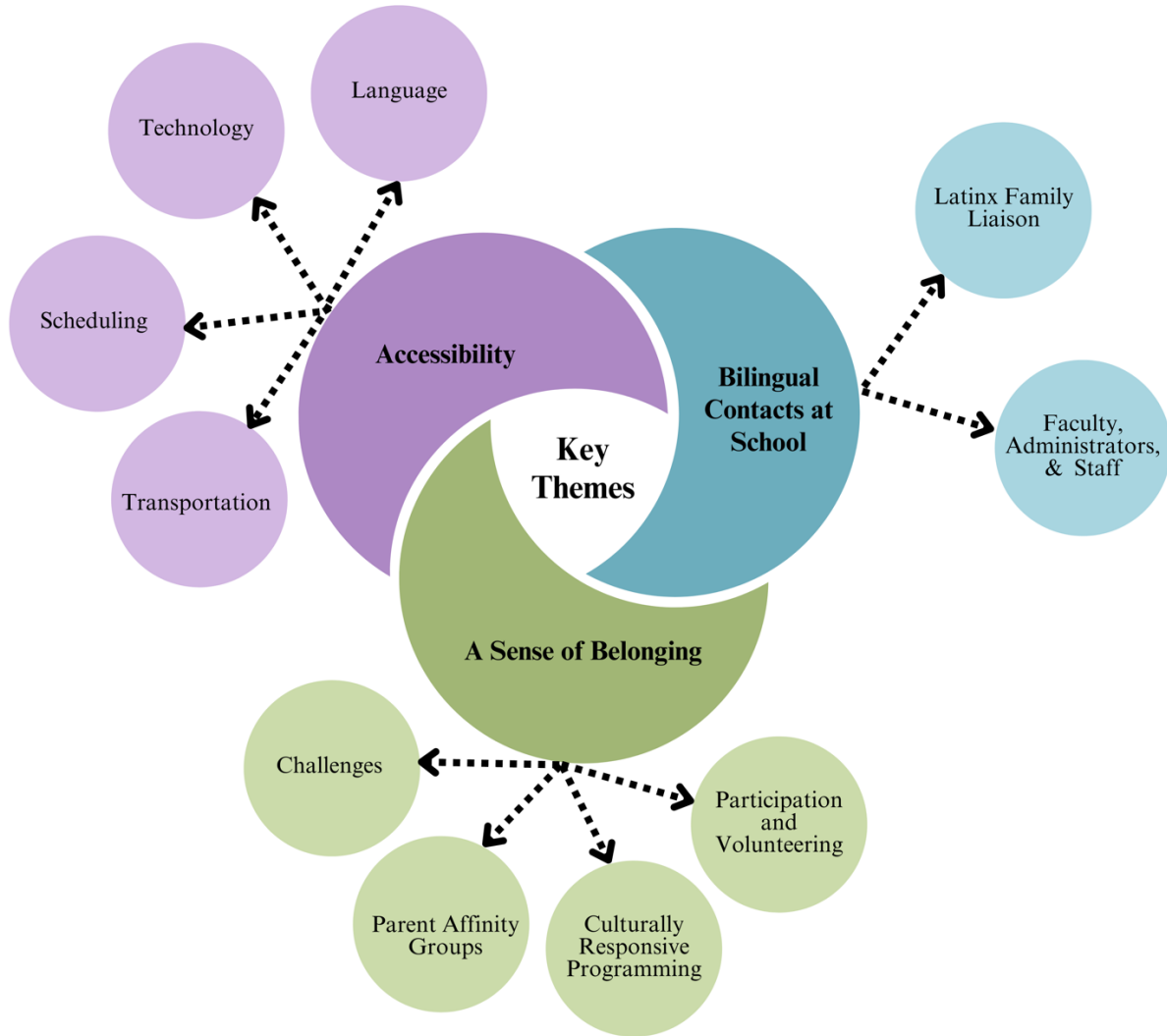
This qualitative study used data from survey results, a group *plática*, individual interviews, and document analysis to address the research question. All 19 Spanish-dominant families associated with The Village School received an invitation to participate in the study. Initially, 11 parents—nine mothers and two fathers—expressed interest in participating. Eventually, seven mothers provided their consent form, completed the survey, and participated in both the group *plática* and individual interviews. Collectively, these seven participants had nine currently enrolled children at the school.

The *mamás* were members of *Familias Unidas*, the Spanish-dominant parent affinity group at the school. All participants were already acquainted with each other through attending *Familias Unidas* monthly meetings, primarily conducted over Zoom. For a more comprehensive understanding, I reviewed the group's meeting agendas and notes from workshops to inform the analysis. The pre-existing sense of trust cultivated over the past 2 years as members of *Familias Unidas* created a conducive environment for open and comfortable reflection and discussion of their experiences during the group *plática* of this study. Regarding the individual interviews, six participants chose to do them via Zoom, and one mother opted for an in-person interview at the school.

As detailed in Chapter 3, the data collection process explored cultural differences, differing perspectives, beliefs, behaviors, and concerns regarding parent engagement, the school's environment, and sense of belonging. The careful analysis of participants' narratives uncovered great insights into various aspects of the *mamás*' experiences at the school. Key themes emerged from the data and included language access, barriers, family-home communication, culturally relevant programming, and volunteering, among other relevant factors. These themes (see Figure 1) provided a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by Spanish-dominant parents in the independent school context.

**Figure 1**

*Key Themes From the Study*



Chapter 4 is organized in the following manner. First, I present a profile of the participants, ensuring confidentiality by using pseudonyms. This is followed by a description of their narrative regarding parent involvement and engagement, where pseudonyms were also used for names mentioned within their quotes. Next, I outline the major findings of the study,

categorized by themes and subcategories. Afterward, I analyze the results through Khalifa et al.'s (2016) theoretical framework. The chapter concludes with a comprehensive summary of the findings.

### **Overview of Participants**

Study participants were seven immigrant mothers, six originating from Mexico and one from Peru. Their residence in the United States ranged from 14–35 years (see Table 1). All seven resided in two-parent households, and their children received financial aid from the school. Understanding the formal educational background of the participants was critical for gaining insight into their perspectives on education and their expectations regarding parent engagement. Among the participants, two (28.5%) did not complete high school, three (43%) had either completed high school in their home country or obtained their GED, and two (28.5%) had received some form of education beyond high school. One of the *mamás* was enrolled in classes to earn a certificate at the time of the interviews. Most participants said they had attended some adult school to learn English at some point while living in the United States. However, none felt they possessed the necessary skills to communicate in English fully.

Among the participants, two *mamás* had more than one child enrolled at The Village School. Additionally, two participants were mothers to alumni of the school. Ana had a son who graduated 3 years ago, and Miranda had two children who graduated 9 and 3 years ago. Miranda and Ana joined The Village School community in 2006 and 2012, respectively. Their children entered The Village School at different grades—one in kindergarten, five in middle school, and one in upper school. Two *mamás* joined the school community only 2 years ago.

Throughout the *plática* and individual interviews, participants shared additional demographic information relevant to their experiences at the school. In the group, there was diversity in employment and immigration status. Only one participant was a stay-at-home mom. Some of the *mamás* did not drive and relied on public transportation, their spouses, or other family members to attend school meetings and events. All the *mamás* indicated they were primarily responsible for monitoring their children’s academic progress and managing school-home communication, in coordination with their spouses or partners.

**Table 1**

*Participants’ Demographic Information*

Pseudonym	Years in the U.S.	Education level	Child(ren) grade level <sup>a</sup>	Financial aid (Y/N)	Alumni children <sup>b</sup>
Ana	23	6th grade	ES, US	Y	1
Claudia	35	4th grade	US	Y	0
Luisa	14	12th grade	US	Y	0
Margarita	25	College	US	Y	0
Miranda	28	GED	MS	Y	2
Nayeli	19	Tech diploma	MS, US	Y	0
Victoria	16	12th grade	MS	Y	0

*Note.* a—ES = Elementary School (Grades K–5), MS = Middle School (Grades 6–8), US = Upper School (Grades 9–12); b—Children from the same family who have already graduated from The Village School

**Parent Perspectives on Parent Engagement**

In examining parent engagement, it was imperative to understand the participants’ viewpoints and perspectives regarding their involvement in their children’s education. During the *plática*, participants shared their thoughts on what they believed parent expectations should be regarding their children’s education involvement versus their reality. All the *mamás* agreed maintaining strong communication with their children was a central factor, and they emphasized supporting their children’s education at home and school was equally important.



Some participants reflected on how the support and involvement differed depending on their child's grade level. Ana shared:

*Cuando están en elementary, son como los años de miel para ellos porque siempre estás junto con ellos, agarrando la manita y “mira, vamos a leer.” Hacemos el esfuerzo, aunque nuestro idioma no es el inglés. . . . Para mí, siento que aunque en español, mis hijos han sentido el apoyo.* [When they are in elementary, those are like the honeymoon years for them because you're always together with them, holding their little hand and “Look, we're going to read.” We make the effort despite our (primary) language not being English. . . . For me, I feel that even though it's in Spanish, my children have felt the support].

Claudia, who had a student in middle school, reflected on the difference between their kids' educational needs when they were little and now that they were older. She agreed with Ana that when kids are in elementary school, parents are more involved and engaged, and the kids themselves allow the parents to be more active. Claudia felt adolescents, however, often think they know what they are doing and limit parent involvement to a certain degree.

Victoria, also a mom to a middle schooler, explained she supported her daughter by ensuring she completed her homework assignments on time and followed her teacher's suggestions. Margarita, whose child was in the upper school, added it was important for parents to listen, pay attention, and be “*papás metidos*” [meddling or deeply involved parents] who reached out to the school and did whatever was necessary to be well informed about their children's progress in school. She considered herself a “*mamá metida*” and encouraged the other moms to do the same. Regarding parent involvement in school, Margarita went on to say:

*Hay que aventarse, no tener pena, no temer, estar siempre ahí al pendiente; ser mamá metida, no importa. Yo sé que la escuela nos va a responder. De alguna otra forma nos va a resolver nuestras dudas y nos va a ayudar.* [We need to take push ourselves, not be shy, not be afraid, always be there on the lookout; be a meddling/involved mom, it doesn't matter. I know the school is going to respond to us. In some way or another, it will address our doubts and help us].

Overall, participants believed their involvement in their children's schooling declined as students progressed to higher grades. In elementary school, teachers invited parents to visit the classroom and participate in student activities, but this was not the case in higher grades. The *mamás* with students in their senior year expressed a desire to increase their involvement and gain more knowledge about their children's college application process.

In addition to monitoring academic progress, the *mamás* discussed various ways parents were engaged in the school, including participating in parent meetings, optional parent coffees—opportunities for parents to meet with the division director for school updates—with the directors, all-school events, speaker sessions, and volunteering opportunities.

### **Themes Across Spanish-Dominant Family Experiences**

The group *plática*, individual interviews, and documents revealed three major themes regarding Spanish-dominant parent-engagement experiences in independent schools: Access to Services and Resources, Bilingual School Contacts, and A Sense of Belonging (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Major Themes That Emerged from the Study*

Major theme	Subthemes
Access to Services and Resources	Language Access Technology Resources Mindful Scheduling of Parent Programming Transportation Resources
Bilingual School Contacts	Latinx Family Liaison Faculty, Staff, and Administrators
A Sense of Belonging	Navigating Challenges and Microaggressions Affinity groups Culturally Responsive Programming Participation and Volunteering Opportunities

In the theme of Access to Services and Resources, the *mamás* discussed their experiences with access, or lack thereof, in various aspects (e.g., language, technology, scheduling, and transportation). Under the theme of Bilingual School Contacts, they extensively shared their perspectives on the support they received when the school introduced a Latinx family liaison, making comparisons to the situation before the liaison’s presence. They also discussed their efforts to find bilingual support in the school throughout their time there. Regarding the theme of A Sense of Belonging, parents described various culturally relevant opportunities the school offered, allowing them to build a sense of community, ultimately enhancing their sense of belonging and empowerment.

**Access to Services and Resources**

As emphasized by Khalifa et al. (2016), understanding and responding to cultural differences is crucial for school leaders in accommodating the needs of students and their families. In alignment with this theory, this study highlighted the centrality of accessibility in the context of parent engagement. In this context, accessibility refers to the extent of access Spanish-dominant families have to services, environments, or information that enables them to stay well-

informed about their children's academics, access resources, and actively participate in various school events. Simultaneously, parent narratives revealed barriers that made it difficult for them to have access to these essential components.

### ***Language Access***

Language access was a major issue discussed by all participants. They reflected on the language barrier they faced when navigating and engaging in their children's education. Spanish being their primary language and having limited English skills, participants acknowledged the challenges they encountered in communicating with the school from the beginning when they first applied and enrolled their children at The Village School. Throughout various points in the *plática*, they consistently expressed variations of "*pero como no hablo inglés*" [but since I don't speak English], clarifying the reasons for not being able to engage in their children's schooling to the extent they desired.

Ana reflected on her language limitations, stating, "*Yo sé que el español no nos tiene que limitar a involucrarnos, pero siempre sí se necesita el idioma para poder hacer un poquito más*" [I know that Spanish does not have to limit us from getting involved, but the language is always needed to be able to do a little more]. Luisa shared her biggest challenge was speaking English. Although she could understand some when spoken slowly, she often relied on online translators and her son for help with written communication. This sentiment resonated with all participants, as it was mirrored in their experiences.

Claudia recounted her earlier challenges when her daughter first enrolled at the school 7 years earlier, expressing, "*Me sentía muy perdida por mi inglés; con mi español no podía acceder yo a todas las cosas que estaban pasando con el progreso de mi hija y todas esas cosas*"

[I felt very lost because of my English; with my Spanish, I couldn't access all the things that were happening with my daughter's progress and all those things]. However, things improved a couple of years ago when the school started collecting data on parents needing interpretation services. The *mamás* who had been at the school for over 2 years reported a significant improvement in language access in grade reports and teacher–parent and school–home communication during this time. Ana shared her feelings regarding the progress in language access, stating:

*Yo siento que es en la ayuda que nos dan. Se preocupan por los niños y por las familias que nuestro primer idioma es el español. Yo siento y pienso que si están haciendo esto o que si lo siguen haciendo es porque nosotros, no nomás los hijos, la familia es importante para la escuela.* [I feel that it is in the help they give us. They care about the children and families whose first language is Spanish. I think that if they are doing this or continue doing it, it's because we, not just our children, the family is important to the school].

There was a consensus among all seven *mamás* that this was the most informed they had ever felt regarding their children's education.

**Student academic progress.** The Village School posted student grade reports along with teacher narratives on its website 3 times a year, each time corresponding to a trimester. According to participants, these teacher narratives offered detailed descriptions of their kids' progress in class and made suggestions in areas that needed improvement. The *mamás* emphasized the importance of these narratives as they provided crucial information for them to support and advise their children effectively. Margarita commented:

*Cuando estamos en la página de internet, estamos viendo dónde están sus calificaciones, están los assignments que tienen. También ahí nos podemos meter y ver qué entregaron tarde, qué no entregaron, qué está pendiente, está todo ahí. Es lo bueno de esta escuela que nos puede dar esa oportunidad de saber si lo están haciendo todo o no.* [When we are on the website, we see what their grades are and what assignments they have. Also, we can go in there and see what they submitted late, what they did not turn in, what is pending; everything is there. That's the good thing about this school; it gives us the opportunity to know if they are completing everything or not].

Victoria mentioned reading the reports in English sometimes did not make sense, and she had to ask her child for help. This sentiment resonated with all the participants. A challenging aspect of online translations was that they often overlooked specific cultural nuances in the school's curriculum or unique terminology for certain concepts. However, 2 years ago, the school began providing Spanish translations of teacher narratives for Spanish-dominant parents directly on the school website, or they could request them from the Latinx liaison to receive them via email. The *mamás* expressed their appreciation for having the narratives available in Spanish, which enabled them to better understand the content without relying on their children for translation.

Ana shared she felt more independent in parenting her children now that she had direct access to their progress reports, stating, "*A mí me ha ayudado para saber cada trimestre como va evolucionando en lo académico mi hijo*" [It has helped me to know how my son is progressing academically each trimester]. Another *mamá* communicated similar feelings. Nayeli shared, "*Ahora lo puedo hacer yo solita sin ayuda de mis hijos y estar checando cómo van*" [Now I can

do it by myself without help from my children and check how they are doing]. Miranda added, “*Ahorita que mandan las calificaciones y están ahí en el sistema y uno las puede ver, está uno más informado*” [Now that they send the grades and they are there in the system and one can see them, one is better informed]. The Spanish translations of the progress reports significantly empowered the *mamás*, enhancing their involvement in their children’s education and understanding of school matters.

**Parent-teacher communication.** In this context, parent–teacher communication refers to personalized interactions (e.g., emails, phone calls, and virtual and face-to-face conversations) between parents and teachers or school administrators concerning their children’s education and socioemotional well-being. Based on participants’ accounts, teacher–parent communication presented challenges before interpretation and translation services were available to them. Miranda recalled, “*Mi miedo era, las maestras no hablan español, no conocía a nadie en la elementary . . . fue un reto bien grande*” [My fear was, the teachers don't speak Spanish, I didn't know anyone at the elementary school . . . it was a big challenge]. All the *mamás* agreed parent–teacher communication was much more precise with the introduction of language services, enabling them to provide better support for their children. Claudia expressed gratitude for communicating effectively with her daughters’ teachers, deans, advisors, and school therapists when tending to her child’s mental health. She said, “*(Mi hija) estaba muy mal y en realidad no hubiera podido seguir adelante así como estaba*” [(My daughter) was doing very badly, and honestly, she would not have been able to continue in the state she was in].

To communicate with teachers and administrators, parents wrote their messages in Spanish and emailed them to the intended recipient, copying the Latinx family liaison, who

would translate the message into English and vice versa. Teachers were able to check their rosters for families who requested interpretation services. Claudia explained, “*Podía mandarles un correo electrónico por medio de la coordinadora de las familias latinas con todo lo que yo quería decir y preguntas que yo tenía académicamente de mi hija. Todo fue muchísimo más fácil para mí*” [I could send them an email through the Latinx family liaison with everything I wanted to say and questions I had about my daughter’s academics. Everything was much easier for me].

Ana reflected:

*Ahora, siento que tengo la libertad de poder preguntarle a cualquier maestro cuál es la necesidad de mi hijo, . . . eso es algo que antes era muy penoso. Y pues no es lo mismo que un estudiante haga un email o lo haga por mí. Entonces, yo me siento más en confianza con el apoyo de (la coordinadora).* [Now, I feel I have the freedom to be able to ask any teacher what my child’s needs are . . . that is something that was very embarrassing before. It is not the same when a student writes the email or writes it on my behalf. So, I feel more confident with the support from (the liaison)].

All the *mamás* emphasized having language access significantly facilitated their written and verbal communication with teachers, thus enhancing their awareness of their children’s education and well-being.

**School-home communication.** This study’s exploration of school–home communication included the weekly school newsletter; all-school emails; and communication from administrators such as deans, the director of financial aid, divisional directors, and the headmaster. Participants openly discussed the challenges they experienced with school–home communication and acknowledged that recent improvements had enhanced accessibility.



Miranda, who had been a part of The Village School community for 17 years, recalled, when she first joined the school, all communication was through physical mail and less frequent than the current email-based communication. She appreciated that school communication was now primarily via email and was sent to both parents and students.

All participants indicated they regularly checked the weekly email newsletter upon receipt. The majority stated they could understand a lot of the content because the announcements followed a consistent pattern and structure. Occasionally, the announcements included translations in Spanish, particularly for Latinx family affinity group meetings. However, the *mamás* acknowledged using online translators to look up words or phrases for better understanding or relied on their children to clarify “*alguna palabrita o algún detallito*” [a specific word or small detail]. Additional support was available through the school’s Latinx family liaison when participants needed further clarification.

The *mamás* had different experiences with all-school or divisional emails. Emails from the headmaster sometimes included an embedded link to a Spanish translation of the email, which participants found helpful as it eliminated the need to seek additional support to access the information. However, emails from the divisional directors were exclusively in English, and participants sometimes found the need to contact the Latinx family liaison for clarification on division-specific information. Some of this information included COVID-19 protocols, back-to-school nights, and school updates. Miranda expressed her desire for more consistent translation of email sent from the different division directors.

Participants discussed a significant shift in communication with the director of financial aid in the last 2 years. During this period, the director began emailing financial aid information

both in English and Spanish, providing information about book vouchers, school lunches, and the application process. The *mamás* expressed their happiness in being able to email him directly and receive responses in Spanish, despite the director not being bilingual. Some of the *mamás*, however, shared they were still too shy to email the director directly, as one stated, “*No sé qué decir o cómo decirlo*” [I don’t know what to say or how to say it]; but, they appreciated having the option to do so. In those situations, they sought the help of the family liaison.

Ana felt the financial aid application process had become much more accessible. She shared:

*Ahorita me siento más que feliz y agradecida, ya no siento como que: ¿Qué voy a hacer? ¿A quién voy a buscar? ¿A quién voy a recurrir? O sea, son cosas que quiera o no sí preocupan. Ya no tengo que estarme preocupando en la cuestión de las preguntas que tengo.* [Right now I feel more than happy and grateful, I no longer feel like: What will I do? Who will I reach out to? Who will I turn to? In other words, there are things that, whether we want to or not, are worrisome. I no longer have to worry about the questions I have].

Ana appreciated not having to look for external help. She believed the process had become more accessible through the availability of guidelines in Spanish and the ability to ask questions directly, saying, “*Creo que han facilitado mucho para nosotros que dominamos más el español y si no nos acercamos pues ya no es porque la escuela no lo ofrezca.*” [I think they have made it a lot easier for us who are Spanish-dominant, and if we don't engage, it's not because the school doesn't offer it].

Participants consistently expressed their gratitude for receiving school information in their primary language, reducing barriers that may have previously impacted their engagement with important school-related matters and meeting deadlines.

**School meetings and events.** In the context of The Village School, school meetings included Spanish-dominant parent affinity meetings, optional parent–director meetings, elementary school weekly meetings, and all-parent or grade-specific meetings with advisors, division directors, and other administrators. School events included back-to-school nights, grade-level parent potlucks, guest speaker presentations and workshops, a Latinx college night, and similar events.

Participants considered the Spanish-dominant parent affinity meetings through the *Familias Unidas* group to be the most language accessible. The meetings were conducted in Spanish by the Latinx family liaison. They aimed to update parents regarding school communication and upcoming school events. All participants in the study had previously participated in these affinity meetings. Generally, other school meetings did not provide interpretation services. Miranda shared the school occasionally recorded a meeting, subtitled the recording in Spanish, and then shared it with parents via email or the school website. The *mamás* regretted not attending parent education presentations due to language barriers.

School leaders aimed to make their general meetings and events inclusive of all parents and caregivers. However, in practice, some meetings left some study participants feeling excluded. All the *mamás* bonded over shared experiences of embarrassment and discomfort during back-to-school night, where they had the opportunity to meet all their children’s teachers. Some recounted the difficulty expressing themselves in English when teachers tried to engage

them in conversation. Ana shared her experience in a particular class where parents were required to introduce themselves and talk about their kids' interests. She struggled to express herself, and each year after that, she thought:

*¿Entro o no entro a esa clase a conocer al maestro? Porque siempre te preguntan algo y entonces tú tienes que decir algo. . . . Este año, la verdad, no fui. Es la única clase que tienes como que compartir. [Do I go in or do I not go into that class to meet the teacher? Because they always ask you something and then you have to say something. . . . This year, the truth is, I didn't go. It is the only class where you have to share].*

This experience resonated with all the *mamás*, and they shared laughs as they heard how each one navigated those uncomfortable moments. Nayeli and Victoria both attended the recent back-to-school night with their spouses, who are also Spanish-dominant. Although it helped that they did not go by themselves, the *mamás* admitted it was still an uncomfortable experience. For Victoria, the past year was her first time attending the class that Ana referenced. She described the cultural shock she felt when she observed parents passing around a talking piece, or as she called it, “un muñequito” [a little toy], knowing their turn to speak was coming. Victoria described it this way:

*Mi esposo asumió el inglés y me dice “¿Qué digo yo? I am Antonio, my daughter is Beatriz, my daughter play, swimming.” Y entonces, y de verdad que nadie se rió, pero nadie. Todos como que . . . o sea, así con respeto, ¿me entiendes? . . . Y de verdad que es una experiencia que tú vives y que es diferente, y tú vas y le cuentas a tus hijos, y tú vives y vas asimilando. [My husband was going to speak in English and says to me “What do I say? I am Antonio. My daughter is Beatriz, my daughter play, swimming.” And then,*

honestly no one laughed, absolutely no one. Everyone was like . . . I mean, respectful, you know? . . . And it really is something you experience and that is different, and you go and tell your children, and you live and continue assimilating].

As she recounted her experience, her tone and demeanor revealed her uneasiness and anxiety. The other *mamás* validated her feelings, saying, “*¡Ay no, así nos pasó a nosotros también!*” [Oh no, the same thing happened to us, too!]. The *mamás* shared laughs and discussed how each of them had handled those moments during back-to-school night.

Victoria went on to explain how the language barrier limited her participation in meetings, stating, “*Nosotros como padres latinos que no podemos hablar inglés, no podemos participar en tantas cosas como los papás que hablan en inglés*” [As Latino parents who cannot speak English, we cannot participate in as many things as parents who speak English]. Other participants agreed it was a challenge for them as well. Victoria added, “*A veces he ido a reuniones y me he sentado atrás porque de verdad siento pena porque no hablo inglés*” [sometimes I have attended meetings and I have sat in the back because I genuinely feel embarrassed because I don’t speak English]. Victoria’s experience resonated for Luisa, who said:

*Sí, ofrecen demasiada ayuda, muchos talleres y todo, pero a veces uno por miedo, por decir, “Ay, no lo voy a entender” o “¿cómo me van a ver?” O el miedo de uno como latino, “Ay, me van a hacer menos.”* [Yes, they do offer a lot of help, many workshops and everything, but sometimes out of fear, one says, “Oh, I’m not going to understand it” or “how will they see me?” Or the fear as a Latino, “Oh, they are going to make me feel less.”]

Several participants agreed with Luisa's sentiments of fear and uncertainty around their language barrier. Nayeli added:

*¿A qué voy? Voy a ser muy sincera, yo no entiendo mucho inglés y a veces uno se encuentra a personas y le empiezan a hablar en inglés y yo me quedo así como que, "What?" O sea, no sé qué me está diciendo y no sé qué contestarle o qué decirle porque no sé qué me dijo. Entonces, sí me siento incómoda.* [Why go? I'm going to be very honest; I don't understand much English and sometimes you meet people and they start talking to you in English and I'm like, "What?" I mean, I don't know what they're telling me, and I don't know what to answer or say because I don't know what they asked me. So, yes, I do feel uncomfortable].

Participants candidly discussed their experiences in meetings and events during which they had to navigate school environments where they felt marginalized. Claudia expressed regret for not participating more but said she felt intimidated by not being able to understand English. Margarita, one of the newer parents at The Village School, expressed, "*Aunque hable mi inglés bien mocho, pero yo sí voy . . . hay que aventarnos al rodeo*" [Although my English is quite choppy, I still go . . . we have to dive into it]. She believed the school was making an effort to be inclusive of Latinx parents, based on her experience as a newcomer coming from a school that did not offer interpretation services. The Village School, for instance, provided live interpretation in Spanish for a Latinx college information night. It also offered financial aid workshops regarding the application process fully in Spanish. Although guest speaker presentations typically lacked interpretation services, the school on occasion recorded them with permission from the speaker and later added subtitles for Spanish-dominant families.

### ***Technology Resources***

The school's increased integration of technology had a positive effect on the way the *mamás* were able to engage with the school. Some of the changes, specifically the use of virtual meeting spaces through Zoom, were implemented to adapt to restrictions during the COVID-19 global pandemic. These changes improved participants' access to their children's academic progress, facilitated communication with teachers and administrators, and increased their participation in meetings. Miranda particularly appreciated the digital system the school used to keep families informed and engaged. She commented, "*Podemos mandar emails, podemos en español, toda la ayuda que podemos necesitar. La verdad que yo creo que somos afortunados de estar en esta escuela*" [We can send emails, we can do so in Spanish, all the help we need. The truth is that I think we are lucky to be in this school]. However, the ease with which they navigated the technology varied among the participants.

All participants had a smartphone, and some had access to a laptop. The *mamás* emphasized that detailed instructions in Spanish and step-by-step Zoom training were crucial in helping them learn how to access information on the school website (e.g., grade reports, lunch accounts, online gradebooks, student schedules, teacher contact information, and other relevant information). Moreover, all the *mamás* were able to join virtual Zoom meetings without help from their children. Nevertheless, this was not the case for every Spanish-dominant family at The Village School.

Participants for this study were required to connect on Zoom for the group *plática*. The *mamás* expressed that Zoom significantly facilitated and enhanced their participation in virtual school meetings. Luisa shared, "*Aunque no pudiera ir y aunque estuviera en mi trabajo, me*

*ponía mis audifonos y ahí estaba escuchando por lo menos de qué hablaban, pero ahorita como las juntas ya son en persona, pues ya no se puede”* [Even if I couldn’t go and even if I was at work, I put on my headphones and at least I was listening to what they were talking about, but now that the meetings are in person, it’s no longer possible]. Margarita shared a similar experience, connecting to Zoom meetings while at work. The other *mamás* agreed, highlighting they were more likely to participate in Zoom meetings due to work conflicts and transportation challenges, which made attending in-person meetings more difficult.

When it came to acquiring the skills needed to navigate the school website, the *mamás* indicated step-by-step workshops in Spanish were practical for them. The Latinx family liaison organized several workshops for *Familias Unidas* and provided one-on-one assistance to individual parents, in person or via Zoom. The skills acquired during these sessions included checking the online gradebook, reviewing the student’s schedule, accessing progress reports, and monitoring attendance. Additionally, the *mamás* learned practical skills, including using email features such as sending messages to multiple recipients or copying them, setting up lunch accounts for their children, and using various features on Zoom.

### ***Mindful Scheduling of Parent Programming***

In the context of accessibility, participants stressed the importance of the school being considerate when scheduling parent meetings. They explained conflicts with their work schedules were another barrier to their participation at school. The *mamás* pointed out the school scheduled some parent programming during work hours, thus making it difficult for them to participate. Luisa stated:



*Antes, sí era como que un poquito más fácil porque ya ves que lo hacían por Zoom, pero ahorita como ya está en persona, pues sí es un poco más complicado asistir . . . Antes tenía un part-time; sí tenía más tiempo.* [Before, it was a bit easier because as you know, they did them on Zoom, but now that they are in person, it is a bit more difficult to attend. Before, I had a part-time job, so I had more time].

Margarita echoed this sentiment, stating that her work schedule sometimes also posed a barrier for her. She explained, “*A veces tenían desayunos en las mañanas cuando hacían juntas del décimo grado. Por ejemplo, este año yo no asistí a ninguno*” [Sometimes they had breakfasts in the mornings during 10th-grade meetings. For example, this year I didn't attend any]. However, Margarita acknowledged that many school meetings did not conflict with her work schedule. She added:

*Hay un montón de meetings en diferentes horarios y también nos dan la oportunidad de involucrarnos. De que no queramos hacer eso, es otra cosa, ¿verdad? A veces no se puede, yo entiendo, cuando trabajamos y todo el rollo, pero yo digo que sí, hay que meternos, hay que ser metidas, hay que aventarnos.* [There are a lot of meetings at different times, and they also give us the opportunity to get involved. If we don't want to do that, that is another issue, right? Sometimes you can't, I understand, when we work and all that stuff, but I say, yes, we have to get involved, we have to meddle, we have to push ourselves].

The liaison made an effort to accommodate Spanish-dominant parents by carefully scheduling *Familias Unidas* meetings on days with fewer conflicts for them. Zoom meetings were scheduled in the evenings at 6:30 p.m., allowing the majority to attend after finishing work.

Based on parent requests, the Latinx liaison adjusted the starting time as needed and in-person meetings were held on Saturdays. Although evenings and weekends worked best for most participants, one *mamá* worked evenings, and two others worked on weekends. Despite the challenges, adjusting the time for *Familias Unidas* meetings was doable due to the group's small size. The *mamás* expressed appreciation for the liaison's consideration of their different situations.

Notably, participants had different opinions and experiences with their jobs and flexibility concerning scheduled meetings. Claudia believed, although work schedules could be a challenge, she encountered a more significant barrier. She shared:

*Pienso que el trabajo y todo lo demás se puede uno figurar. Los trabajos a veces sí le ayudan. No es tanto el trabajo o las obligaciones que tenemos en casa. Para mí no hay otra barrera que el inglés. [I think that work and everything else can be figured out. Jobs sometimes are flexible. It's not so much our jobs or the responsibilities we have at home. For me, there is no barrier other than English].*

Despite the importance of mindful scheduling, the *mamás* unanimously agreed that language accessibility remained a higher priority for them to attend meetings.

### ***Transportation Resources***

Several *mamás* who participated in the study faced challenges related to not driving. They reflected on the impact of not having personal transportation on their ability to participate in school-related activities. They explained that relying on public transportation sometimes made it difficult to attend meetings or events, depending on when the school scheduled them in relation to other factors such as work schedule and childcare.

Victoria shared a recent experience in which she could not attend the school's annual fundraiser event, scheduled on a Saturday night. Her husband worked that night, and she lacked easy access to reliable transportation. She learned from another Spanish-dominant parent that the school had offered ride-share vouchers to assist families receiving financial aid. Ana, whose husband also had a work schedule conflict, requested a transportation voucher. Transportation vouchers were not a common practice for school events, making Ana particularly appreciative of the school's effort to include families with transportation challenges. Although Victoria did not attend, she expressed some guilt about seeking additional help to participate in an event meant to raise funds for financial aid, a benefit her child already received. This experience demonstrated the complex emotions Spanish-dominant parents experienced navigating barriers to engagement in independent schools.

### **Bilingual School Contacts**

Participants discussed the significant benefits of having Spanish-speaking contacts at the school. Several of the *mamás* reflected on the evolution of the support system for Spanish-dominant families since their children first enrolled in the school. Those who had been at The Village School the longest reminisced about the scarcity of Spanish support when they first joined the school community. They recounted how they informally sought out Spanish-speaking people at the school, but there were very few. During their discussion, they highlighted the positive recent changes and the new contacts they had established at the school, substantially improving their overall experience. These contacts included the K–12 Latinx family liaison and some members of the faculty, administrators, and support staff.

### ***Latinx Family Liaison***

To better serve the Latinx students and their families, and to the surprise of the participants, the school established the position of Latinx family liaison 2 years ago. This person's role was created to identify the needs of Latinx students and their families and develop and implement programs that provide support. This support included various aspects, such as offering and arranging interpretation and translation services for Spanish-dominant families, delivering training to improve parent access to information systems, and helping create a more inclusive environment for Latinx families.

All the *mamás* agreed the Latinx family liaison played a central role in supporting them at the school, particularly concerning language services, assistance with their children's academic success, and access to essential resources. According to the parents' accounts, the liaison served as a portal to accessibility, facilitating opportunities for Spanish-dominant parents to connect with the school community and enhance their sense of belonging.

**Languages services.** All the *mamás* expressed satisfaction with the significant improvement in language accessibility since the school appointed a bilingual Latinx family liaison to facilitate communication between them and their children's teachers and administrators. Despite this positive shift, a couple of *mamás* expressed they hesitated attending events due to their limited English proficiency. However, Victoria stated, "*Pues hay que ser valiente, tirarnos a la piscina sin saber nadar, pero ahí hay que estar*" [Well, you have to be brave, throwing ourselves into the pool without knowing how to swim, but you have to be there].

When the *mamás* were asked about the metaphorical "life preservers" they needed to survive and thrive at The Village School, Luisa responded this way:

*Creo que hasta ahorita nos están dando ese salvavidas que necesitamos con la coordinadora de las familias latinas, porque ya cualquier duda o algo que no entendamos, sabemos que la tenemos a ella para ayudarnos. Creo que ese es un gran paso que la escuela ha dado, ponernos una persona que nos ayude, que esté al pendiente de nosotros como familias latinas y que nos dé ese apoyo.* [I think that up to now, they are giving us that life preserver we need with the Latinx family liaison, because if we have any doubts or anything we don't understand, we know that we have her to help us. I think that is a great step that the school has taken, giving us a person to help us, who checks on us as Latinx families, and who gives us that support].

Nayeli also emphasized the importance of the liaison's assistance with teacher communication in supporting her child who was in the 12th grade. Claudia, whose daughter was also a senior, expressed her surprise at the level of support provided by the liaison to Spanish-dominant parents, even when compared to the support she received in her daughter's previous school, where most parents spoke Spanish. She described some of her challenges by stating:

*Yo no sabía ni siquiera meterme a la computadora. Hemos [sic] muchos padres que no tenemos ese acceso porque no tenemos ese conocimiento . . . pero es muy bueno ahorita que tenemos a la coordinadora de las familias latinas, que nos ha ayudado. Y si en cada escuela hubiera una persona como ella, nosotros no sufriríamos tanto.* [I didn't even know how to use the computer. There are many parents, like myself, who don't have that access because we lack that knowledge . . . but it's very good now that we have the Latinx family liaison, who has helped us. And if there were a person like her in every school, we wouldn't suffer so much].

All participants expressed gratitude for the level of support they received as a family from the liaison. That support made a significant difference for Claudia in providing adequate support to her daughter and ensuring her safety and well-being. Claudia explained:

*Todo cambió cuando llegó Xóchitl [la coordinadora de familias latinas] aquí, que nos empezó a traducir todos los grados, las juntas y todas esas cosas. Xóchitl es mi número uno. Cualquier cosa que yo, Dios mío, cualquier cosa que yo necesitaba, Xóchitl estaba ahí. Ahora la gente va a sufrir menos de lo que yo batallé al principio.* [Everything changed when Xóchitl (the Latinx family liaison) arrived here, and she started translating all the grade reports, the meetings and all that stuff for us. Xóchitl is my number one. Anything that I, my God, anything that I needed, Xóchitl was there. Now people are going to suffer less than what I struggled with at the beginning].

Victoria acknowledged it was comforting to know they had someone who genuinely had their best interest in mind. Nayeli also expressed her appreciation for having a direct bilingual contact at the school. She highlighted that things had become much simpler now that she could reach out to the liaison for help instead of relying on her children.

Ana shared her experience of heavily depending on her eldest son for help with school matters before having the family liaison. When her eldest left for college, coinciding with her youngest starting kindergarten at The Village School, she recalled feeling overwhelmed and alone. Ana felt like crying because she did not know who would be there to support her. She shared:

*Precisamente fue cuando mi hijo menor entró que Xóchitl [la coordinadora] empezó a ayudarnos de la manera que lo ha hecho. Y siempre digo yo, y se lo he dicho, Xóchitl es*

*un ángel. Del miedo que yo sentía, como que ella me dio ese empujoncito. . . . Xóchitl nos ha ayudado más de lo que nos tiene que ayudar, yo lo veo así. Y veo que no lo hace como un trabajo, sino al contrario, con humildad, y se lo agradezco.* [It was precisely when my youngest son started that Xóchitl (the liaison) started helping us the way she has. And I always say, and I have told her, Xóchitl is an angel. From the fear that I felt, it's like she gave me that little push. . . . Xóchitl has helped us more than she needed to help us, that's how I see it. And I see that she does not do it as a job, but on the contrary, with humility, and I appreciate it].

All the *mamás* showed a strong connection with the Latinx family liaison. Their stories and anecdotes about how the liaison supported them with language services, facilitated connections, and provided them with resources demonstrated they had built trust with each other. The *mamás* said they initially felt like they were burdening the Latinx family liaison when seeking help. However, they also shared smiles and jokes about how the liaison constantly reassured them they were never a bother and consistently went beyond her responsibilities to support them.

As the school year progressed, most participants felt more comfortable asking for help. Nayeli admitted, “*Todavía me da un poco de pena molestarla*” [I'm still a bit embarrassed about bothering her]. However, the majority agreed with Ana who said, “*Xóchitl nos ha dado la confianza de pedirle ayuda y ya no me da pena*” [Xóchitl has given us the confidence to ask her for help, and I'm no longer embarrassed]. Ana joked, “*¡Me ayuda tanto con Gabriel [hijo], que Gabriel es como su hijo!*” [She helps me so much with Gabriel [son], that Gabriel is like her son!]. Claudia, whose child would graduate in 3 days, jokingly said to the other participants, “*Yo*

*las deajo con Xóchitl y aprécienla, porque yo ya no las voy a ver. Cuídenla*” [I leave you with Xóchitl, so appreciate her, because I won’t see you anymore. Take care of her]. The back and forth between the *mamás* discussing their relationship with the Latinx family liaison provided insight into their feelings of being seen, heard, valued, and empowered.

The Latinx liaison established the protocols for accessing Spanish interpretation and translation services. The *mamás* believed having direct access to information positively impacted the relationship they had with their children. Ana mentioned that accessing information by herself gave her autonomy and allowed her to parent and support both of her sons more effectively. Regarding her older son at the school, she explained, “*Él ya sabe que yo tengo apoyo. Yo puedo saber cosas que él tal vez no me las pueda explicar como el maestro*” [He already knows that I have support. I may know things that he may not be able to explain to me the way the teacher would]. Although she clarified her son was not obligated to translate for her before, she preferred not having to depend on him. Ana felt this helped differentiate her role as a parent and her son’s priorities as a student, as she said, “*Y eso a mí también me da felicidad; saber que Xóchitl nos está ayudando para que podamos entender un poquito más sobre las materias, sobre los maestros*” [And that also makes me happy; knowing that Xóchitl is helping us so that we can understand a little more about the different subject, about the teachers].

***Familias Unidas: Spanish-dominant affinity group.*** *Familias Unidas*, an affinity group specifically created for Spanish-dominant families, was established 2 years ago. Led by the Latinx family liaison, its aim was to enhance school–home communication and foster greater engagement in the school. Families requesting interpretation services for their children upon enrollment are automatically added to the group. The group aimed to bring Spanish-dominant



families together, cultivating a sense of community among them, and facilitating connections between them and the school.

Luisa liked the opportunity to meet other “*mamás latinas*” through *Familias Unidas*, engaging in various activities together, including attending events as a group. Over time, the group has evolved into a supportive network, boosting family members’ confidence in navigating the school environment. Victoria talked about the value of sharing their experiences in this affinity space, stating:

*Yo creo que cada una de nosotras tenemos experiencias diferentes y más las mamás que han estado aquí más años, porque siempre van a compartir una anécdota que nos va a enseñar a hacer mejor las cosas. Y siempre es bueno aprender. [I believe that each of us has different experiences, especially the moms who have been here longer, because they will always share anecdotes that will teach us to do things better. Learning is always good].*

*Familias Unidas* held monthly meetings, typically on Zoom. The meetings provided a helpful platform for reviewing school–home communication, disseminating important updates from all three divisions, and providing parent education. The Latinx liaison-led workshops support parents in navigating the school website, accessing online grade books and grade reports, understanding their children’s grades, and addressing other tech-related needs. Claudia reflected:

*Nos enseñó a cómo meternos a la Internet, cómo mirar los grados de nuestros hijos, cómo mirar las cartas que nos mandan. Muchos padres que tenemos los hijos aquí no sabíamos ni siquiera cómo usar una computadora, mucho menos entrar a un Zoom. Xóchitl decía “presiona aquí, presiona acá.” [She taught us how to use the Internet, how*

to check our children's grades, how to access the letters they send us. Many parents with children here didn't even know how to use a computer, much less join a Zoom (meeting). Xóchitl would say, "Press here, press there."]

Participants explained they created a group chat for members of *Familias Unidas* to interact, coordinate with each other, and send meeting reminders. Overall, the *mamás* agreed the information they got in the monthly meetings was important for them to have equal access to parent information and learn how to participate and become more engaged in the school. Ana shared that *Familias Unidas* helped her "*tener la confianza de poder opinar acerca de diferentes cosas referentes a mis hijos*" [have the confidence to have an opinion about different things relevant to my children]. The *mamás* indicated they felt more empowered due to having access to information, forming connections with other Spanish-dominant families, and being better equipped to advocate for their children.

### ***Faculty, Staff, and Administrators***

Participants discussed the advantages of having multiple Spanish-speaking contact points in the school. Having bilingual contacts at the school was a relatively new experience for them, and it varied depending on their child's grade level and division. In all three school divisions (i.e., elementary, middle, and upper), the receptionists were fluent or nearly fluent in Spanish. Before the Latinx family liaison, some *mamás* occasionally reached out to the receptionists with general questions but tried not to "bother" them too much. They commented, despite being helpful and kind, receptionists were often busy with other tasks, making it challenging to seek assistance from them. Nonetheless, many times, participants turned to them for help in clarifying home-school communication and addressing attendance-related issues.

Some *mamás* were happy their children had teachers or advisors who spoke Spanish. The families appreciated being able to connect with more people from the school who could communicate with them in their dominant language. Margarita's son joined The Village School 2 years ago. Margarita considered herself fortunate that her son had a Spanish-speaking advisor when he started. The advisor communicated with Margarita frequently and demonstrated she cared about him having a smooth transition into an independent school and his overall well-being. Margarita also appreciated that the advisor understood her cultural background and concerns as a new parent at the school. Margarita shared:

*Tenía una gran confianza con la consejera, la verdad. María sí era bien metida y a mí me encantaba que me dijera, “a Oscar le hace falta esto, esto y esto. Hay que estarlo empujando.” Me decía todo lo de él.* [I had great trust in the advisor, to be honest. María was very involved (or nosy) and I loved that she told me, “Oscar needs this, this and this. We have to push him.” She told me everything about him].

Margarita expressed disappointment that her son's advisor changed the second year. She said her experience with the new advisor was not the same, and they struggled to establish a strong connection due to language barriers and cultural differences. One of Nayeli's sons also had a Spanish-speaking advisor and agreed with Margarita that it had made a significant difference in how she was able to support her son. However, Nayeli shared she was unaware the advisor spoke Spanish until the family liaison informed her, considering it a missed opportunity not to have known sooner. Ana, whose youngest son was in first grade, found it especially helpful that her child had a teacher who was fluent in Spanish. Because her son had only started learning English a few months before starting kindergarten, Ana appreciated communicating

with her son's teacher in Spanish regarding his progress and felt comforted knowing her son received support in Spanish when needed.

Although the number of Spanish-speaking individuals at the school was limited, the *mamás* expressed more satisfaction with the level of access they now had, making them feel more at ease in the school community.

### **A Sense of Belonging**

The participants were quite aware of the substantial cultural differences and social circumstances influencing their involvement in their children's school. While openly sharing their experiences, they demonstrated an understanding of their position as Spanish-dominant, immigrant, low-income families in a school where they were ethnically underrepresented among predominantly higher-income families. The *mamás* approached the discussion about their sense of belonging with enthusiasm, appreciation, and openness about some of the challenges they faced and described how culturally responsive programming had impacted their sense of belonging in the school community.

### ***Navigating Challenges and Microaggressions***

The heartfelt *plática* among the *mamás* uncovered instances of microaggressions that, even when subtle, were impactful moments that left lasting impressions on their experiences. Some of the microaggressions or feelings of inadequacy they described were rooted in their language barriers, socioeconomic disparities, and school-culture differences.

**Feeling othered.** During the *plática*, the *mamás* spoke candidly about challenging moments that made them feel othered in the school community, with Miranda being the first to allude to microaggressions she had experienced in the school. She shared, during meetings, there

were some occasions when other parents made her feel inferior. She recalled a specific incident when she and her husband struggled to speak English during a meeting. Miranda said, “*En la mesa nos tocó una persona que sí se burló abiertamente de nosotros. Nos sentimos muy mal. Mi esposo y yo volteamos y nos vimos y le dije, ‘¿este güey se está riendo de nosotros?’*” [At our table we had a person who openly mocked us. We felt terrible. My husband and I turned around and looked at each other and I told him, “Is this guy laughing at us?"]. Although the incident happened many years ago, she was still affected by it. Her tone and expression changed as she told the story. Despite the incident, Miranda continued making an effort to attend parent meetings, reasoning, “*A mí no me importa cómo me mire la gente. Lo que me importa es que mi hijo sepa que yo estoy ahí*” [I don’t care how people look at me. What matters to me is that my son knows that I am there].

Miranda’s experience prompted other *mamás* to share about other uncomfortable moments. Luisa recalled an incident at the first school event she and her husband attended as new parents. During the event, they had to introduce themselves to a couple sitting beside them, but the other couple turned away and talked to someone else instead. Luisa added, “*Me sentí incómoda . . . se sintió feo*” [I felt uncomfortable . . . it felt awful]. In contrast, Victoria expressed relief that she had a different experience, stating, “*Las pocas veces que he ido a la escuela, sí me han brindado mucha ayuda y los papás también solitos se han acercado a mí*” [The few times I have gone to school, they have offered me a lot of help, and the parents have also approached me on their own]. She added, “*Nunca he visto que me hayan hecho mala cara. Nunca me he sentido que me hayan visto mal*” [I’ve never seen anyone give me a dirty look. I’ve never felt like

they've looked at me in a bad way]. These varied experiences stress the diversity of interactions in the school community.

**Socioeconomic disparities.** During the *plática*, participants shared subtle and not-so-subtle microaggressions or uncomfortable interactions they or their kids experienced regarding socioeconomic disparities. Ana shared about an uncomfortable situation involving two bilingual Latinx parents. According to Ana, this couple consistently ignored her greetings in Spanish but would occasionally speak Spanish with other people in the school. She said, "*Es triste a veces. Uno no sabe qué pensar, si lo hacen como para que uno vea que ellos hablan inglés o no sé*" [It's sad sometimes. One doesn't know what to think, as if they do it to show off that they speak English or I don't know what]. Although there were no direct indications that socioeconomic status or class played a role in this situation, Ana felt the couple treated her this way due to class differences. The other *mamás* expressed their disappointment with this behavior from the bilingual parents. Victoria commented:

*Son gente que habla español y te quieren hacer de menos cuando somos lo mismo. Y yo siento que entre latinos a veces es así. En vez de que nos ayudemos entre todos, siempre entre nosotros mismos nos queremos opacar, y no debe de ser así.* [They are people who speak Spanish and want to make you feel less than, even though when we are the same. And I feel that sometimes it is like that among Latinos. Instead of helping each other, we always want to overshadow each other, and it shouldn't be like that].

Miranda also shared how she emotionally processed incidents dealing with condescending attitudes from more affluent parents at the school, saying:

*Por los niños nosotros tenemos que hacer como que esas cosas no pasaron, porque la escuela no tiene la culpa, la escuela no puede controlarlo. Al final, gracias a Dios, a lo mejor ese señor no agarra ayuda financiera y ese señor paga full tuition y gracias al dinero que ese señor da, mi hijo va a la escuela también.* [For our children, we have to act as if those things didn't happen because it's not the school's fault; the school can't control it. In the end, thank God, maybe that man doesn't receive financial aid and he pays full tuition, and thanks to the money that man pays, my son goes to that school too].

Miranda emphasized the importance of not letting such incidents affect the children negatively or them as parents. Although she expressed her statement with conviction, the hurt in her tone was palpable to the other *mamás*. Ana responded, “*Que nada nos haga inclinar la cabeza, que no nos dé pena. Debemos sentirnos orgullosos, en primer lugar, por la escuela donde nuestros hijos estudian*” [Don't let anything make us hang our heads, don't let it make us feel ashamed. We should feel proud, first and foremost, of the school where our children study].

A *mamá* recounted a poignant story of her child grappling with socioeconomic disparities. She said her family “*pobremente*” [modestly] could only afford a trip to Las Vegas and Disneyland during the summer. At the beginning of a school year, a classmate mocked her child because they had visited the same two places as the previous two summers. This experience distressed her because her child felt uncomfortable with a situation that was beyond her control. Her family could not travel outside the country due to immigration status and financial constraints. She shared this story to illustrate students also deal with uncomfortable moments related to their socioeconomic status. She added, in these situations, she would tell her children:

*Ustedes son como una esponjita que tienen que ir a la escuela a absorber, lo más que puedan absorber. No te puedes comparar con todos los niños, porque siempre va a haber niños con mucho dinero. Tú no te puedes comparar con nadie. Tienes una familia, eso es lo que a ti te tiene que importar. Somos una familia. [You are like a little sponge that has to go to school to absorb as much as you can absorb. You can't compare yourself to all the other children, because there will always be children with a lot of money. You shouldn't compare yourself to anyone. You have a family, that's what should matter to you. We are a family].*

This sentiment resonated with the other *mamás*, affirming their top priority was always the future and well-being of their children. When asked whether socioeconomic differences presented a barrier to their engagement and involvement in the school, their answer was a firm no. Nevertheless, they did acknowledge that sometimes they paused and considered factors such as whether certain events were inclusive of them, having appropriate attire, and fitting in. Despite these concerns, their focus remained on their children and their education.

**Cultural differences.** Cultural differences in the school setting occasionally presented challenges for Spanish-dominant families, affecting their understanding of school culture and event expectations. Margarita's experience at a grade-level meeting showed the hurdles faced when cultural nuances are not clear. She said:

*No decía código de vestimenta. Entonces, pues yo llegué rayando de trabajar. Iba de tenis, de pans y todo, y la gente venía bien elegante vestida. Me sentí chiquita, chiquita, de verdad. De por sí era la única latina. La gente se me quedaba viendo. . . . No me hicieron ninguna grosería, pero sí de plano, yo me sentí fatal, me sentí mal, me sentía el*



*frijolito en el arroz blanco*. [It didn't say a dress code. So, I arrived straight from work. I was wearing sneakers, sweatpants and all, and people were dressed very elegantly. I felt so small, really small. I was already the only Latina. People were staring at me. . . . They didn't say anything rude, but really, I just felt awful. I felt terrible. I felt like a bean in a bowl of white rice].

Margarita did not like standing out because of her casual attire, but her experience exemplified her willingness to *aventarse*—to step out of her comfort zone—and actively engage. Despite feeling self-conscious, she clarified to the other *mamás* that she had no regrets. She was pleased to meet other 10th-grade parents and felt validated by those who knew her son. She said the experience was worthwhile—“*valió la pena*.”

In response to Margarita's encouragement for the *mamás* to just get out there and overcome their fears or shyness, Claudia shared another personal challenge. She described how a person's level of education could also influence their interactions, stating:

*Si yo me pongo con una persona a hablar, yo que no tuve una educación alta, con una persona que tiene educación más alta, tiene manera de expresar más. La educación le quita esa pena que trae uno, porque en realidad sí, de cultura traemos una timidez . . . y personas que estudiaron a veces aunque no sepan el (inglés), como dice la señora, se avientan, porque se les quita esa timidez. Mucho tiene que ver la educación que nos dan y lo cultural también. Son dos cosas combinadas.* [If I start talking with someone, someone like me who didn't receive a high education, with someone who has a higher education, they'll have a better way of expressing themselves. Education takes away the shyness that one carries because, in reality, we do have a certain shyness because of our

culture . . . and people who have an education, even if they don't know (English), as the lady said, they get out there because they're less shy. It has a lot to do with our education level and cultural differences as well. The two factors are combined].

Claudia went on to say, "*Habemos [sic] muchas personas, yo me cuento en una de ellas, que a veces no sabemos ni el español completamente*" [There are many people, and I count myself as one of them, who sometimes don't even know Spanish well]. Claudia's statements revealed the apprehension she sometimes experienced interacting with other families, including in Spanish. However, her active participation with the Spanish-dominant affinity group, *Familias Unidas*, allowed her to connect and form a sense of community with fellow Spanish-dominant parents, which, she said, significantly boosted her confidence.

### ***Affinity Groups***

Participants highlighted how their involvement in affinity groups had greatly deepened their sense of belonging in the school community. They regarded these groups as invaluable spaces that not only kept them well-informed about school matters but also provided relevant programs, volunteer opportunities, and a platform for Latinx families to foster connections and build community. Every *mamá* actively participated in the *Familias Unidas* monthly meetings. They automatically became members of the group upon requesting interpretation services when they enrolled their children in the school. In addition to this group, they had the option to participate in *Nosotros*, a K–12 Latinx family affinity group. As outlined on The Village School's website, the main objective of their family affinity groups is to enhance the sense of belonging for underrepresented members of the community. Impressively, six *mamás* were also

active participants in *Nosotros*, highlighting the positive impact of these affinity groups on fostering a greater sense of community and belonging.

**Familias Unidas.** The *mamás* found great value in being part of *Familias Unidas* because it provided essential support and the opportunity to connect with other Spanish-dominant parents who shared similar experiences. Margarita expressed the benefit of being in affinity in *Familias Unidas*, stating, “*Uno como que se siente más confiado con la gente latina. . . . Al fin y al cabo sé que somos pocas familias, pero estamos unidas. Somos muy unidos los latinos*” [One feels more confident with Latino people. . . . At the end of the day, I know that we are only a few families, but we are united. We Latinos are very united].

Actively participating in this affinity group created a safe and comfortable space for the *mamás*, whether in virtual or in-person settings. In this environment, they felt comfortable being their authentic selves and engaging in conversations of significant importance to them. The *mamás* found comfort in knowing they were not alone in experiencing similar challenges, and they valued the opportunity to seek and offer support in the group. They recognized the group’s small size and shared backgrounds facilitated discussions on various topics, fostering a sense of unity and providing valuable insights and guidance.

Establishing connections with other Spanish-dominant parents through *Familias Unidas* enabled the *mamás* to build trust and community with one another and enhanced their relationship with the school. Ana described it like this:

*[Familias Unidas] es algo que a mí me ha fortalecido mucho como mamá, como madre de familia. Y también me siento muy bien porque me siento ya formar parte de la escuela y siento también que puedo yo aportar en lo que yo pueda ayudarles. [(Familias Unidas)*

has empowered me a lot as a mom, as a school parent. I also feel great because I already feel part of the school, and I also feel I can contribute in whatever way I can help].

Moreover, all participants enjoyed connecting through their cultural traditions and backgrounds. The *mamás* said they frequently coordinated their attendance at school events to be there together. This mutual support proved valuable in motivating each other to become more involved in the school community.

***Nosotros family affinity group.*** *Nosotros* was a parent-led group established in the previous year, conducting monthly meetings on Zoom and in person. It provided a bilingual space for Latinx and multiracial Latinx families in grades K–12 to connect and foster a sense of community. Miranda expressed her happiness with the group being a bilingual space, recalling, “*Cuando vi eso me dije, yo puedo ser parte de este grupo, porque es como mitad de inglés, mitad de español. ¡Es perfecto para mí!*” [When I saw that, I told myself, I can be a part of this group because it’s half English, half Spanish. It’s perfect for me!].

The *mamás* valued how the group engaged Latinx parents in culturally relevant ways and celebrated Latinx heritage. For instance, *Nosotros* organized a *tamaleada* [tamale-making party] during the winter break. The event was family friendly, allowing several *mamás* to bring their children along. Luisa, who attended the event, remarked:

*Lo que me gustó fue que no nomás éramos puros latinos . . . la conexión que hubo estuvo muy bonita porque no importó si hablabas o no hablabas el inglés. La señora Carmen [anfitriona] creó un momento especial para todos. No importó si habláramos inglés o no, si fuéramos mexicanos, americanos, fue una convivencia muy bonita. Fue una buena experiencia porque también pude llevar a mi hijo.* [What I liked was that we weren’t just

Latinos . . . the connection that happened was very beautiful because it didn't matter if you spoke English or not. Mrs. Carmen [host] created a special moment for everyone. It didn't matter if we spoke English or not, if we were Mexican, American; it was a very nice gathering. It was a good experience because I was also able to bring my son].

In this statement, Luisa expressed the value of Spanish-dominant parents participating in *Nosotros*. They connected with more Latinx families, expanded their social circle, and engaged in cultural traditions and activities. Despite some language challenges in this space, Luisa noted, “*Aquí nos entendemos a señas o como sea, pero nos entendemos. Tanto ellos como nosotros, los latinos, pusimos como que ese granito para darnos a entender como fuera*” [Here we understand each other through gestures or however it may be, but we understand each other. Both they and we, the Latinos, made that effort to make ourselves understood in any way possible]. Nayeli also observed, “*Así uno va conociendo más familias y de ahí poco a poquito va teniendo contacto con más gente, ¿verdad? O sea, no nos cerramos en un solo sitio del círculo, entonces lo vamos ampliando*” [This way, you get to know more families, and little by little, you start to have contact with more people, right? I mean, we don't confine ourselves to just one part of the circle; we keep expanding it].

*Nosotros* organized an annual Latinx family party in the spring and extended an invitation to all Latinx school employees in the school. Some members volunteered to make the decorations for the party and helped with the setup and clean up. Although some initially felt uneasy volunteering for a school event, they explained that this event was different because they received clear instructions in Spanish on what they needed to do. Luisa shared, “*El año pasado, cuando fue la fiesta de las familias latinas, conocí a más mamás latinas. No sé si sea porque*

*somos latinas, pero sí es como que había más comunicación*” [Last year, when we had the Latinx family party, I got to meet more Latina moms. I don't know if it was because we're Latinas, but it felt like there was more communication]. Several *mamás* also stated, “*Es que este evento era para nosotros*” [This event was for us], highlighting their dedication to creating a welcoming experience for the broader Latinx community in the school. The collaborative effort gave them a sense of pride as they successfully organized a big event that brought visibility to the Latinx community. Although Miranda did not have the opportunity to volunteer for the event, she felt motivated to do so next year, commenting, “*Cuando vi a Ana ahí en la comitiva, me dio como una envidia de la buena. . . . A mí me gusta andar en cosas así*” [When I saw Ana there in the planning committee, I felt a good kind of envy. . . . I like being involved in things like this].

Lastly, to celebrate the achievements of the graduating Latinx seniors and students completing elementary or middle school, *Nosotros* also weaved ribbon leis for them to wear during graduation or moving-up ceremonies. Two *mamás* participated. This activity showcased the bonds in the group and instilled a sense of unity and pride among Latinx parents in their children’s educational journey.

### ***Culturally Responsive Programming***

Culturally responsive programming was a key focus both in the group *plática* and individual interviews. Participant narratives shed light on the initiatives and support systems implemented by The Village School leadership in recent years to address the specific needs of Latinx Spanish-dominant families. An important aspect of this approach was ensuring language accessibility for parents who were not proficient in English. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, The Village School offered translation and interpretation services, employed bilingual faculty

and staff, and provided resources in Spanish to enhance communication and parent engagement. When creating these programs, leaders considered the cultural norms, values, and practices of Spanish-dominant parents. The *mamás* expressed their gratitude for the school's inclusive efforts, noting these initiatives fostered a respectful and welcoming environment, created safe spaces for them to engage, and made them feel valued in the school community.

Participants discussed various programs and events the school offered to support Spanish-dominant parents, including a virtual Latinx college talk organized by the school's college counseling office. The event provided live Spanish interpretation and addressed topics relevant to Spanish-speaking parents, and diverse socioeconomic and immigration statuses. The *mamás* expressed concerns about the college process and their ability to help their children fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This particular event was open to parents with children in Grades 9–12. The school chose to do it this way to facilitate the early engagement of Spanish-dominant parents whose children were first-generation college students. The *mamás* indicated they felt more confident in advocating for their children after attending the event. Additionally, Ana was excited about the upcoming addition of a Latinx Spanish-speaking college counselor at the school, adding to the positive outlook.

In addition to college-related support, the school also organized financial aid information meetings and workshops conducted in Spanish for current and prospective families. Ana expressed appreciation for the enhanced access to financial aid information. Parents had the option to request one-on-one assistance from the Latinx liaison to complete the financial aid application, either in person or through virtual means. Regarding their financial aid needs, some of the *mamás* explained they were particularly grateful for the additional financial assistance the

school provided during the COVID-19 global pandemic, as some faced financial hardship due to loss of income.

Overall, the *mamás* were satisfied with the school's recent efforts to enhance accessibility and support for their children's education. Feeling better equipped and empowered, they stayed committed to providing the best possible support for their children's academic journey, prioritizing their educational and socioemotional well-being.

### ***Participation and Volunteering Opportunities***

All *mamás* strongly desired to be active participants and volunteers at the school but felt constrained by their limited English proficiency. The *plática* revealed a significant internal struggle with wanting to volunteer more but fearing not understanding what they need to do. Ana explained:

*Sí, hay gente que te tiene paciencia y te puede explicar despacio, con lujo de detalles, pero hay veces que llegas y nomás te dicen, "Haces [sic] tú eso." Y si no entendiste, lo hiciste mal. O sea, para mí ese es mi miedo.* [Yes, there are people who are patient with you and they explain things slowly in great detail. But there are times when you arrive, and they just tell you, "You do this." And if you didn't understand, you did it wrong. For me, that is my fear].

Nayeli shared a similar sentiment, expressing, "*Me va a dar pena ir y no hacer bien las cosas*" [I would be embarrassed to go and not do things right]. Despite the language barriers, Margarita stressed the importance of participation for Spanish-dominant parents. She candidly expressed, "*Nosotros como latinos nos cohibimos, como que nos da pena a veces hablar y pensamos que nos van a criticar, que nos van a hacer bullying*" [As Latinos, we hold back,



sometimes we feel embarrassed to speak and we think they are going to criticize us, that they are going to bully us]. Ana pointed out, although Spanish should not limit their involvement, “*Siempre si se necesita el idioma para poder hacer un poquito más*” [You always need the language to be able to do a little more].

The *mamás* acknowledged the benefits of active involvement and volunteering at the school. Luisa mentioned her involvement in *Nosotros* expanded her network of contacts beyond *Familias Unidas*, facilitating connections with more Latinx and multiracial Latinx families in the school community. Ana agreed, saying, “*Te da la facilidad de hacer más comunidad*” [It gives you the ability to build more community]. Luisa also shared her past volunteer experiences at her child's previous school. She believed even a simple greeting could help others feel more comfortable at school events. However, Luisa's biggest obstacle was the fear of not being understood or being judged by others due to her limited English proficiency. Luisa said, “*¿Y si no me entienden? ¿Y si no me puedo explicar? Esa es como que mi piedrita en el zapato que no me deja dar el salto*” [And if they don't understand me? And if I can't explain myself? That's like a little pebble in my shoe that doesn't let me take a leap].

The *mamás* acknowledged they needed to push themselves out of their comfort zones and participate more. Victoria expressed, “*También es un poco el miedo de que no nos acepten o no nos miren bien. Yo hablo por mí*” [It is also a fear of not being accepted or being judged. I speak for myself]. Margarita added, “*Hay que involucrarnos. Que no nos de miedo. Hay que estar pendientes con los chiquillos*” [We have to get involved. We shouldn't be afraid. We have to be attentive to the little ones]. Margarita consistently emphasized to the group the importance of Spanish-dominant parents being unafraid of making their presence visible. When Miranda

mentioned she sat in the back at an event, Margarita reacted by telling her, “*¿Por qué te sentaste hasta atrás? No te sientes atrás. ¡Hay que sentarse adelante!*” [Why did you sit in the back? Don’t sit in the back. You have to sit upfront!]

Nayeli observed, through involvement and volunteering, they also had the opportunity to expand their connections to parents who may not be Latinx but could speak Spanish. She shared about an experience she had at a parent dinner where a bilingual parent introduced her to others and translated for her. One mom told her that her husband spoke perfect Spanish and she spoke a little. She reflected, “*La verdad es que yo me mantenía un poco alejada por lo mismo del idioma. . . . Y yo nunca me juntaba así porque me daba pena. Y luego uno se va enterando que sí hablan español*” [The truth is, I kept myself a bit distant because of the language (barrier). . . . And I never joined gatherings like this because I felt embarrassed. But then you start to find out that they do speak Spanish]. Margarita believed having someone who spoke Spanish at every meeting could potentially make a difference in engaging Spanish-dominant parents.

The *mamás* were more motivated to participate in events when they observed other Latinx parents volunteering or when they could attend as a whole family. When deciding whether to volunteer, they considered various factors (e.g., language accessibility, the presence of familiar faces, the possibility of coordinating with someone to avoid being “alone,” and considerations about appropriate attire). In the end, the *mamás* collectively acknowledged the need to make a more significant effort to increase their participation and involvement in the school community.

## Culturally Responsive School Leadership

As outlined by Khalifa et al. (2016), a culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) framework highlights the responsibility of school leaders to adapt their practices to address the unique needs of marginalized students and their families. The study focused on two core tenets. One tenet involved promoting a culturally responsive and inclusive school environment and the other pertained to engaging students, parents, and indigenous contexts. CRSL presents a commitment to establishing school environments that are culturally sensitive and inclusive and actively engage all students and their parents in their cultural contexts. Khalifa et al. (2016) reminded school leaders they operate at multiple levels and in different contexts in the school environment. This implies the commitment to CRSL is a collective effort that spans multiple aspects of an educational institution.

Khalifa et al. (2016) recognized the community serves as an invaluable source of information. The group of Spanish-dominant *mamás* that participated in this study provided important insights into the CRSL practices at their school, especially about support systems intended to benefit them directly. The study employed a comprehensive approach to thoroughly understanding their experiences and viewpoints. The *mamás* answered questions that assessed their awareness of their children's academic progress, access to school-home communication and resources, any challenges they have encountered, their involvement in the school, and their overall sense of belonging.

Several themes that emerged during the *plática* were in alignment with CRSL principles. These themes included Effective Communication, Active Parent Involvement, Cultural Competence, and a Deep Understanding of Diversity. As this study focused on the experiences

of Latinx Spanish-dominant parents, there was a priority on assessing whether the school addressed potential language and cultural barriers. CRSL ensures parents have a comprehensive understanding of critical information in a language accessible to them.

The CRSL framework suggests socioeconomic status and employment can impact parental involvement in their child's education (Khalifa et al., 2016). Socioeconomic factors can affect parental availability, their resources at home, or means of communication with the school. Although participants openly discussed potential language, transportation, and scheduling barriers, none of the *mamás* acknowledged facing direct barriers to participation linked to their socioeconomic status. This lack of acknowledgement is noteworthy, especially considering the nuanced experiences of socioeconomic microaggressions that had impacted their sense of belonging. Upon analyzing the data, study findings aligned with CRSL principles and reaffirmed the importance of establishing culturally responsive school leadership practices that value the diverse backgrounds of all families and foster inclusive school environments.

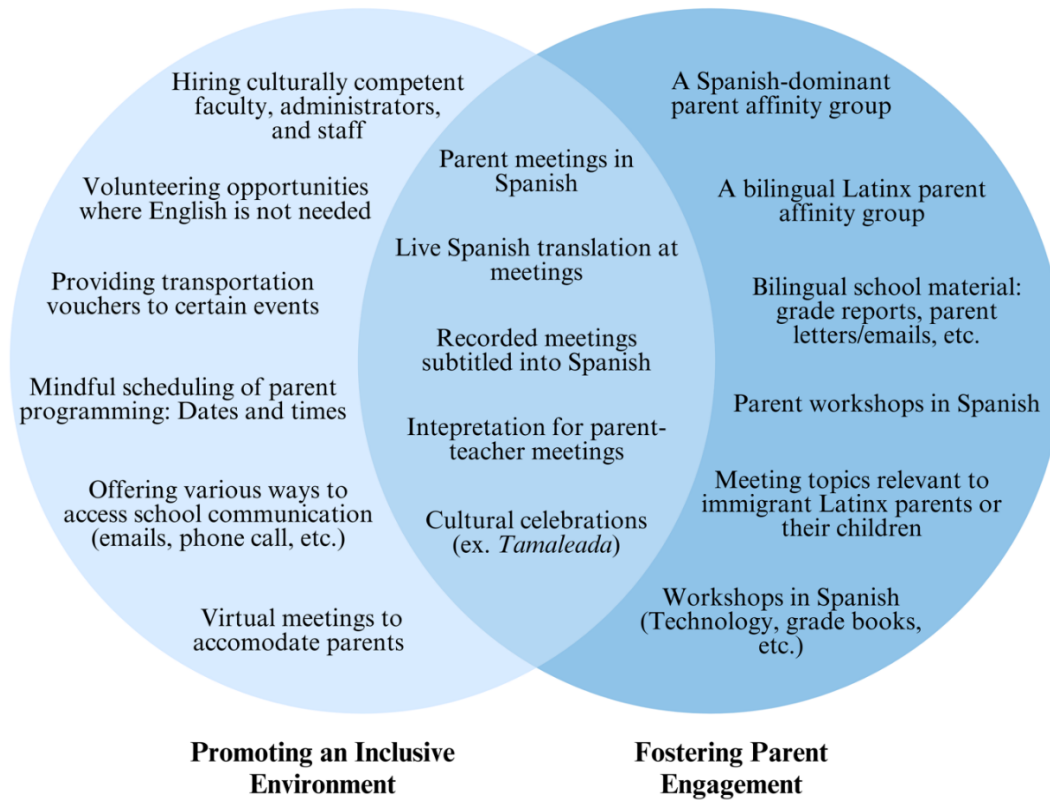
### **Summary of Findings**

Parent engagement, in the context of the study, included regular participation in school meetings and events, staying informed via newsletters, staying updated about student progress at school, and engaging appropriately in decision-making processes that impact students (Khalifa et al., 2015, 2016; Kuru Cetin & Taskin, 2016). Major themes that emerged from the study included Access to Services and Resources, Bilingual School Contacts, and Sense of Belonging. Participants' narratives highlighted the school's commitment to improving communication and increasing the engagement of Spanish-dominant families through CRSL practices and initiatives.

Figure 2 lists some of these practices and initiatives, aligning with CRSL’s Tenets 3 and 4, which foster a more inclusive environment and enhanced parent engagement in the school.

**Figure 2**

*Examples of Culturally Responsive Practices for Engaging Spanish-Dominant Parents*



The Village School’s culturally responsive practices included the following resources, activities, and opportunities for engagement:

- Translation services: The school implemented parent–teacher communication protocols, allowing parents to contact teachers and administrators in Spanish, and vice versa. Subsequently, the Latinx liaison translated these communications into English or Spanish. It also provided translation of documents that informed parents

about school activities and policies. Certain meetings and educational presentations were recorded and subtitled in Spanish for improved accessibility.

- Interpretation services: The school offered interpretation services for individual meetings with teachers, administrators, and counselors. Live interpretation was also provided during certain events to enable Spanish-dominant parents could participate.
- Bilingual informational material: The school provided Spanish translations of some emails and announcements in the weekly newsletter, ensuring parents had access to essential information.
- Bilingual faculty, administrators, and staff: The school had some faculty, administrators, and support staff proficient in both Spanish and English. Their presence helped minimize language barriers and provided parents with more access points for communication.
- Workshops: The Latinx family liaison led educational sessions and workshops in Spanish aimed to help parents navigate the school website, access their children's academic progress reports, and view the online grade books. Some sessions also covered topics such as understanding the curriculum, exploring independent school culture, and engaging in cultural self-reflection.
- Affinity groups: The school established dedicated spaces for Latinx-Spanish dominant parents to connect with one another, fostering connections based on their shared culture, heritage, and experiences with their children.

- Cultural events and activities: The school organized events, celebrations, and activities that celebrated and embraced the diverse cultural backgrounds of Latinx students and their families.

The *mamás* recognized culturally responsive strategies empowered Spanish-dominant parents to offer the best possible support for their children’s academic journey, which remained their top priority. As Miranda stated, “*Si estamos aquí (en esta escuela) es por un motivo. Y el motivo es el futuro de nuestros hijos, nada más*” [If we’re here (in this school), it’s for a reason. And the reason is our children's future, nothing else]. Their determination, resilience, and profound love for their children was palpable in these deeply involved *mamás metidas* throughout our *plática* and conversations—inspiring the title of this dissertation.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As presented in Chapter 2, parent engagement plays an essential role in a child's educational journey, impacting their learning and academic achievement. As cultural diversity continues to grow in independent schools, school leaders must prioritize the development of culturally sensitive and responsive approaches. Such approaches are necessary to create inclusive school environments for underrepresented students and their families, as suggested by Khalifa et al.'s (2016) culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) theoretical framework. Prioritizing these measures is essential for enhancing parent engagement and involvement.

The central focus of this study was to gain insights into the experiences of Spanish-dominant parents in an independent school and to assess the impact of culturally responsive school practices on their engagement in their children's education. The narratives shared by the participants, a group of seven Spanish-dominant *mamás*, directly addressed the following research question: What insights do Spanish-dominant parent narratives provide about their engagement, the impact of culturally responsive leadership practices, and their sense of belonging in an independent school context? The research revealed several key findings highlighting the importance of leadership support for language access, culturally relevant programming, bilingual contacts in the school, and other relevant resources to enhance access for these families.

Study findings offered a deeper understanding of the experiences of Spanish-dominant parents in independent schools. This understanding can serve as a foundation for school leaders



to improve support systems for these parents, ultimately impacting the academic success and well-being of Latinx students in independent school settings.

In this concluding chapter, I discuss my personal and professional connections to this study, drawing on my personal life and experiences working with Spanish-dominant families. I then discuss the findings, their implications, and practical recommendations for school leaders, administrators, teachers, and future researchers committed to promoting educational equity and social justice in independent schools. I also explore the study's relevance to social justice issues before concluding with a final reflection.

### **From Personal Experience to Professional Practice**

Before delving into the findings, I describe the profound connection between my personal and professional background and the subject of this study. On a personal level, growing up with an immigrant Spanish-dominant mother gave me a deep understanding of the challenges and obstacles she faced while trying to engage with my school and advocate for my education. Professionally, my extensive career in independent schools with nearly 2 decades as an educator and 3 years as associate director of Latinx support and outreach has allowed me to work closely with Spanish-dominant families and assist them in navigating the independent educational setting.

Some of the narratives shared in this study strongly echoed my mother's experiences while she supported my educational journey in public schools. I distinctly remember my mother's numerous efforts to be involved in my schooling. Unfortunately, her support was often constrained by her limited English proficiency, her modest educational background, and our family's low socioeconomic status. Similar to some study participants, my mother faced conflicts

due to work schedules that interfered with meeting times, and she did not have access to personal transportation.

When I moved to the United States at the age of 10, I had to learn English myself, which meant it was a while before I could help my mother with translations. When I inquired how she managed the language barrier, she explained when meeting teachers, she would kindly request them to speak “very slowly” but was often fortunate to have a fellow parent or volunteer student help her. My mother exemplified what one of the participants in the study referred to as a *mamá metida*—a meddling and deeply involved mom—highlighting the determination of Spanish-dominant parents to be actively engaged in their children’s education.

Professionally, observing the unwavering commitment of Spanish-dominant parents I have worked with has been an eye-opening journey. I have gained insight into the parents’ resilience and dedication to accessing the best educational opportunities for their children, often while making significant sacrifices to have them in independent schools. These sacrifices encompass the following:

- dedicating extensive time to lengthy commutes to and from school,
- constantly seeking additional and outside help with language access,
- overcoming technological challenges, and
- navigating a school environment and culture where their representation is limited.

Both the Spanish-dominant families with whom I have worked and the study participants encountered common challenges with language barriers, impeding effective communication with the school and limiting their access to their children’s academic progress. Some families also have experienced financial strains, especially when faced with expenses beyond tuition (e.g.,

extracurricular activities or international exchange programs). Despite these challenges, Spanish-dominant parents in this study consistently prioritized their children's education and often expressed gratitude for the opportunities and resources the school offered their children.

### **Challenging Deficit Narratives**

Drawing from my professional experiences, I recognized the need to address the deficit narratives associated with Spanish-dominant parents. I have been surprised by blanket statements made by educators and school leaders suggesting Latinx parents do not place much value on education. Besides perpetuating stereotypes and biases, these narratives have unjustly equated a parent's lack of involvement with a lack of interest or commitment to their children's education. Khalifa et al.'s (2016) CRSL framework, however, emphasized the importance of challenging narratives that stigmatize students of color and their families. When school leaders view families through a deficit lens, it can have a discouraging or undervaluing effect on parents. Instead, school leaders should recognize and consider the influence of cultural differences and unique family circumstances that impact the level of engagement. Challenging these narratives has been a deeply personal mission for me, fueled by the relationships I have cultivated with Spanish-dominant families over the years. Spanish-dominant families must not be confined to a deficit story based on stereotypes and assumptions. They deserve to have their individual experiences, challenges, and contributions recognized, understood, and valued.

### **Humility and Appreciation**

In my extensive experience collaborating with low-income immigrant Spanish-dominant parents in independent schools, I have consistently observed a profound sense of gratitude toward their children's school. Although gratitude is a positive sentiment, this thankfulness,

notably, causes parents to hesitate sometimes when seeking assistance or resources. For instance, some parents fear inconveniencing or “bothering” school staff, even when they genuinely need help. Feeling they are already receiving a lot of help from the school can deter them from advocating for additional support. In numerous conversations with Spanish-dominant parents, they shared an initial expression of, “*Disculpe que la moleste*” [I’m sorry to bother you]. This sentiment also resonated with some study participants. Two *mamás* mentioned actively working to overcome their hesitation in seeking help. Victoria jokingly expressed her commitment to this goal, saying, “*¡Pero el próximo año sí voy a ‘molestar’ más a la coordinadora!*” [Next year, I will “bother” the liaison more!]. These instances highlighted the importance of anticipating this cultural aspect and developing strategies to ensure Spanish-dominant parents feel comfortable and empowered to seek support for their children and themselves.

**Key Takeaways: “*Tirarse a la Piscina Sin Saber Nadar*”**

The central takeaway from this study is the profound engagement of Spanish-dominant *mamás* in their children’s education, symbolized by their willingness to “*tirarse a la piscina sin saber nadar*” [throw themselves into the pool even without knowing how to swim]. Participants sometimes felt they just needed to take the plunge and learn as they went. Some parents hoped, through this brave approach, they would eventually learn to “float” and survive the challenging “waters” of the independent school environment. This metaphor, shared by one of the participants, vividly illustrated the courage and resilience of the *mamás* as they navigated the unfamiliar independent education system. However, CRSL must aim to provide an environment where marginalized students and their families will not just “survive” but “thrive.”

During this study, participants identified indispensable “life preservers” for surviving and thriving in their children’s school. First, language access services were of utmost importance, ensuring Spanish-dominant parents fully understood school–home and teacher–parent communication. By having access to translation and interpretation services, the *mamás* overcame some language barriers. This allowed them to gain comprehensive insights into their children’s academics and discover how to access additional resources to support them better, such as academic support, mental health services, learning specialists, college counselors, and other essential support. This heightened awareness improved parental involvement and empowered Spanish-dominant parents to provide more practical guidance, support, and encouragement to their children, significantly contributing to their overall success. Furthermore, improved communication fostered a stronger sense of connection among these parents in the school community, resulting in a more inclusive and supportive environment for all. As a result, language access and support services effectively empowered the *mamás* to actively engage in their children’s educational journey and seek the necessary resources to ensure their academic and holistic well-being.

Second, the study brought to light the supportive role of bilingual contacts at the school, acting as lifelines for Spanish-dominant parents as they navigated the complexities of independent school education. The *mamás* valued the presence of a dedicated Latinx family liaison at the school, recognizing this role as crucial in bridging language gaps and addressing questions across all three K–12 divisions and interdepartmentally. The liaison offered practical answers, support, and resources but also empowered the *mamás* to comfortably communicate with teachers regarding their children’s progress. Furthermore, participants felt the liaison’s

support reduced the burden on their children, who often acted as translators for them, allowing the *mamás* to be more independent in their parenting. This open line of communication ensured parents felt valued and informed, enhancing their ability to actively support their children's educational endeavors.

The *mamás* were also grateful for the presence of some bilingual teachers, administrators, and supportive staff at the school. Although they did not all have experience with their children having bilingual teachers, those who did found it immensely helpful in facilitating direct communication. For instance, having bilingual teachers allowed the *mamás* to engage more actively in parent–teacher conferences, resulting in more meaningful discussions about their children's progress and educational needs. Generally, staff who communicated effectively in both English and Spanish made parents feel more at ease when interacting with the school community. Overall, having multiple bilingual individuals at the school broadened the *mamás*' access to the school and school community, fostering a stronger sense of unity and cultural identity and creating a school environment where they felt their children could thrive academically and personally.

Third, the participants stressed the significance of school leadership being culturally responsive to their unique needs and providing culturally relevant opportunities for their engagement. These opportunities allowed participants to be their authentic selves and parent their children in ways that felt equitable, inclusive, and accommodating to their cultural backgrounds.

During the *plática*, some *mamás* demonstrated vulnerability as they candidly shared their experiences with microaggressions they encountered during their time at the school. They

discussed how these experiences made them feel othered and impacted their interactions with different stakeholders, from dealing with individuals who made assumptions about them to feeling uncomfortable entering certain spaces. Nonetheless, they explained how they encountered those moments and worked past them, always prioritizing their children's well-being.

The *mamás* agreed participation in Latinx parent affinity groups was a crucial support system for them. The Spanish-dominant group, *Familias Unidas*, opened the door to creating more connections across divisions with other Spanish-dominant families with similar experiences at the school. Having this group gave them a sense of belonging and validated their experiences, whether they were positive or challenging. They were grateful to have the group as a support system to keep them “afloat.”

The bilingual Latinx parent group, *Nosotros*, also played a significant role in expanding the *mamás* network in the school community. Parents connected through shared heritage, cultural backgrounds, and a solid commitment to supporting their children's education. These interactions, conducted in their primary language, extended beyond the Spanish-dominant families and had a profound impact on the *mamás*. They were able to build confidence, nurture relationships, share valuable experiences, and collaborate with fellow parents. In this group, parents embraced cultural traditions such as organizing a *tamaleada* during the winter holidays. These connections provided the *mamás* comfort and encouragement to be authentic, celebrate their cultural heritage, and fully embrace their roles as *mamás metidas* [deeply involved mothers] in their children's education. The *mamás*' response to affinity groups showed their resilience and the transformative power of culturally responsive practices. These practices helped create a

welcoming and inclusive school environment where they felt truly seen and empowered to be active participants.

In addition to the previously discussed key takeaways, the study revealed other noteworthy aspects related to educational access for Spanish-dominant parents. The *mamás* expressed gratitude for parent programming that considered various cultural and socioeconomic factors, influencing their engagement and participation. These factors included a range of elements (e.g., cultural traditions, conflicting work schedules, immigration status, and education level). Most participants explained the benefits of the school's consideration of these factors, reflected in multiple opportunities (e.g., evening virtual meetings, culturally relevant events, activities tailored to immigrant parents, technology workshops, in-depth discussions regarding school culture, and informative sessions on independent school education). The diverse programming addressed the immediate needs of Spanish-dominant families and contributed to building a better informed, involved, and cohesive parent community. This, in turn, fostered a supportive and inclusive educational environment.

The notion that Spanish-dominant parents might have to risk “drowning” in the independent school environment troubled me. However, as parents began to open up during the *plática* and subsequent interviews, it was clear they were in a much better place due to the changes implemented by their children's school to be more equitable and inclusive. Language access, bilingual school contacts, and culturally responsive programming served as essential life preservers that helped the *mamás* overcome barriers while navigating the school. The experiences of the *mamás* demonstrated, when parents are encouraged to be their authentic selves, it has a positive influence on their participation and engagement with the school. The



*mamás*' unwavering priority consistently revolved around supporting their children's academic success and socio-emotional well-being. This study stands as compelling evidence of the transformative power of inclusive and culturally responsive school leadership practices, particularly in settings where Spanish-dominant families are highly underrepresented (e.g., in independent schools across the country).

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The study's findings offer practical implications for fostering inclusivity and enhancing the engagement of Spanish-dominant families in independent schools. In broader terms, these recommendations serve as a guide for CRSL to establish a welcoming and supportive environment for parents and caregivers whose primary language is not English.

#### **Ensuring Language Access**

One key implication of the study involves the responsibility of school leadership to ensure language access for Spanish-dominant families. Language barriers present a significant obstacle to parental engagement; therefore, providing language access to families whose primary language is not English is crucial. Schools must prioritize offering adequate and accessible language services to empower parents to engage more effectively in their children's education.

To achieve this, schools should implement a system for collecting data in the parents' primary language to identify families in need of translation and interpretation services. Comprehensive language access should cover both written and oral communication. Schools must consider translating important written communication, documents, and announcements, such as:

- grade reports and teacher narratives,

- student-specific emails from teachers, administrators, college counselors, learning specialists, and therapists,
- student academic conduct and disciplinary action letters,
- college counseling information,
- financial aid application and guidelines,
- transportation, lunches, and technology needs,
- health-related announcements,
- release forms for field trips or other student programming,
- enrollment contracts, and
- school handbook.

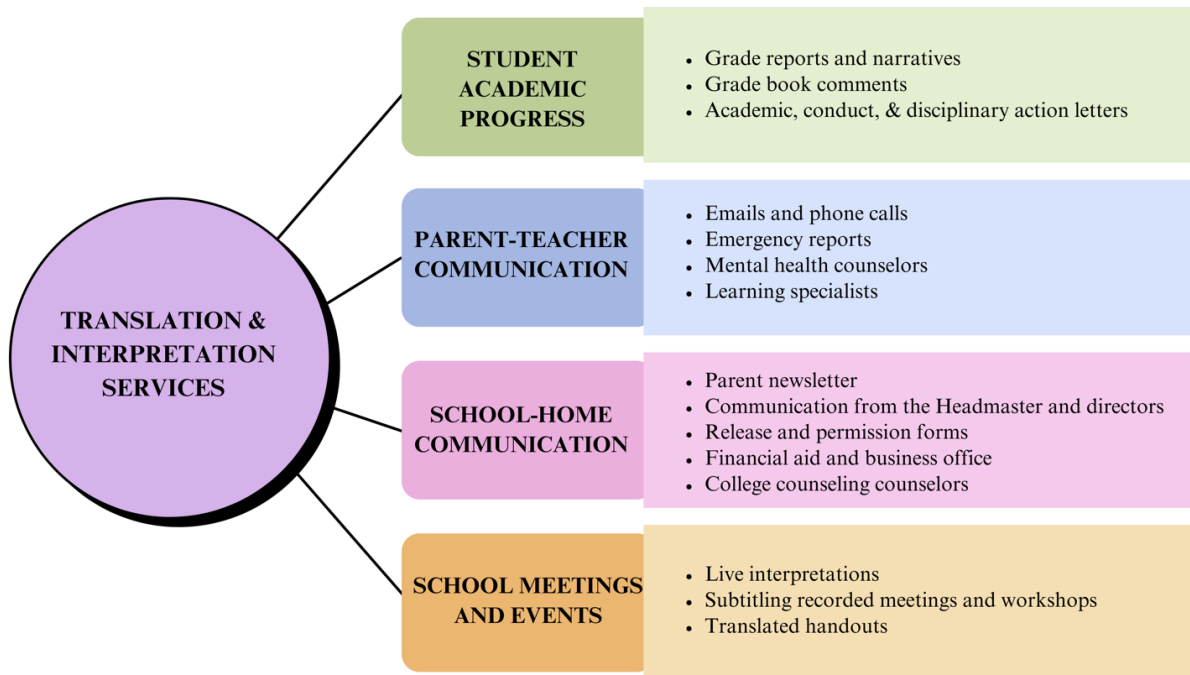
They should also consider oral communication, such as:

- calls from teachers, administrators, and counselors,
- parent–teacher conferences,
- back-to-school night,
- parent education workshops, and
- guest speaker presentations.

This approach ensures parents and caregivers remain well-informed about their children’s academic progress and socio-emotional well-being. Figure 3 provides a comprehensive overview of the translation and interpretation services that the *mamás* found beneficial or desired at their school.

**Figure 3**

*Translation and Interpretation Services for Spanish-Dominant Families*



Online translation tools are helpful; however, due to their limitations, they cannot guarantee accuracy or contextually appropriate translations. Therefore, school leaders must allocate the necessary resources for qualified translators and interpreters to ensure the quality of the translation services. Human editing is indispensable to guarantee accuracy in communication in the unique context of a school's culture.

**Providing Bilingual Support**

The second key implication of this study underscores the importance of linguistic inclusivity in fostering a supportive educational environment for Spanish-dominant families. Beyond language access, there is a critical need for independent schools to designate a dedicated bilingual point of contact, a Latinx family liaison, to address the needs of Latinx families.

### ***The Role of a Latinx Family Liaison***

All the *mamás* consistently highlighted the pivotal role played by the Latinx family liaison in facilitating their engagement and access to their children's education and the school. The family liaison must be a bilingual person with a deep understanding of, and preferably personal connections to, Latinx culture and customs. They should be capable of effectively bridging connections with Spanish-dominant parents across language and cultural contexts.

The Latinx family liaison is instrumental in identifying the needs of Latinx students and their families and in developing and implementing programs that offer them academic and socioemotional support. This key contact for Latinx families would help address their concerns and create culturally responsive programming tailored to the unique needs of Spanish-dominant parents. The liaison can also assist with onboarding new Latinx families, supporting a smooth transition for them into the school community. This is especially important for families who are new to independent school education. Moreover, the liaison can establish language services for Spanish-dominant families as soon as they join the school and provide them with resources to better support their children's academic journey.

### ***Hiring for Linguistic Diversity***

In the hiring process, school leaders should purposely seek individuals for specific roles who are bilingual in Spanish, enabling them to serve as additional contacts and resources for Spanish-dominant families. This strategic approach aligns with the broader goal of creating a school community that reflects and celebrates the diversity of its student body. By establishing a robust support structure for Latinx families and increasing critical mass, particularly for Spanish-

dominant ones, the school not only supports their thriving but also enhances outreach efforts to attract more Latinx families to the school community.

Part of this intentional hiring practice should involve compensating individuals with Spanish language skills, considering the additional responsibilities they may take on compared to counterparts without these skills. This could apply not only to roles like receptionists but also to key positions in the college counseling team, school therapists, learning specialists, advisors, and teachers. Recognizing and rewarding language skills in these positions enhances the overall support structure for Spanish-dominant families.

### **Fostering Cultural Responsiveness and Inclusivity**

Another critical implication of this study is the importance of culturally responsive programming that embraces Spanish-dominant cultural contexts. It highlights the need for independent schools to proactively and intentionally create programs and initiatives that recognize and celebrate the rich cultural backgrounds and traditions of Spanish-dominant families. Achieving inclusivity requires school leadership to prioritize the needs of marginalized groups, as enhancing inclusivity for the most marginalized group promotes inclusivity for everyone.

Recommendations for independent school leaders include the following:

- Establish a Latinx Spanish-dominant parent affinity group: The school first needs to establish a method for the families to self-identify as Spanish-dominant. The group should be led by a bilingual Latinx family liaison or a school administrator who can keep parents updated and informed. This group would allow school–home communication to improve and provide a safe and supportive space where Spanish-

dominant parents can connect, share experiences, and build a strong sense of community. It can be a valuable space for discussing common concerns, collaborating on school-related activities, and offering mutual support.

- **Create bilingual parent spaces or a bilingual parent affinity group:** This recommendation focuses on creating spaces or a dedicated group that encourages Spanish-dominant parents to interact and connect with bilingual Latinx families. This promotes inclusivity and encourages parents with varying language proficiencies to participate actively in school activities and discussions. It also serves as a bridge for Spanish-dominant parents to engage with the broader Latinx community in the school, promoting a sense of unity and cultural identity.
- **Develop family support pods:** This concept is a collaborative support approach to assist Spanish-dominant families in their transition to a new independent school. This idea involves pairing incoming Spanish-dominant families with current families who can offer guidance and support. Each pod would consist of three families, the incoming Spanish-dominant family and two volunteer families—one Spanish-dominant and the other bilingual. The current Spanish-dominant family can provide valuable support in understanding the unique experiences and needs of the new family, particularly in terms of language access. They can guide new families on how to access resources effectively. On the other hand, a current bilingual family can play a crucial role in facilitating the newcomers' integration into the school community. These pods could serve as a tool in helping new Spanish-dominant families navigate the independent school environment. They would foster a sense of belonging, provide

essential guidance, and ease the transition into the school community, ultimately creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for the new families.

- **Assess Spanish-dominant family needs:** To ensure inclusivity, schools should conduct surveys aimed at identifying the unique needs and challenges faced by Spanish-dominant families in the school. These assessments can encompass language access, academic and technological support, socioemotional well-being, and any other areas that directly impact the educational journey of the children. By gaining insights into the families' specific needs, school leaders can tailor support, services, and programs to address their concerns. In this regard, having a Spanish-dominant affinity group can be beneficial in providing a space where these assessments can be done.
- **Recognize and celebrate cultural differences:** Independent schools should actively recognize and celebrate the diverse cultural backgrounds in their community, with a particular focus on historically marginalized groups. School leaders can conduct regular workshops and training sessions for all stakeholders to increase cultural awareness and sensitivity. It is also essential to avoid the deficit narrative when addressing families who are not proficient in English.
- **Host culturally relevant gatherings:** Organizing events and gatherings that reflect the cultural traditions and heritage of Spanish-dominant families can be a powerful way to build connections and promote inclusivity. These gatherings allow parents to share their cultural pride and traditions with the broader school community, fostering understanding and appreciation among all members. Although affinity groups could host this type of activities, it is important for the school to also organize some. These

events demonstrate solidarity and a genuine commitment to embracing and celebrating the cultural richness of Spanish-dominant families. These events also serve as opportunities for cultural exchange and mutual learning, creating a more inclusive and welcoming school environment for everyone.

- **Socioeconomic considerations:** It is important to acknowledge the socioeconomic disparities among families and anticipate possible challenges for them. For instance, being mindful in event scheduling recognizes that some parents and caregivers may have multiple jobs or limited flexibility in their employment. For any organized school event, it can also be helpful to specify appropriate attire—or indicate if it is not considered important—especially for events designed to be more inclusive for certain groups.
- **Parent governance:** Parent governance is integral to fostering inclusivity. Creating opportunities for Spanish-dominant parents to contribute their voices and cultural insights in the school's governance structure is a step toward ensuring a more inclusive school environment. A flexible structure should provide opportunities for involvement that accommodate different conditions, including virtual participation. Additionally, clear communication about the roles and responsibilities of parent representatives is essential for encouraging their meaningful participation.

These recommendations emphasize the importance of independent schools taking the necessary steps to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for Spanish-dominant families. This goal can be achieved by acknowledging their rich cultural diversity and heritage and addressing their unique challenges.



In conclusion, the recommendations derived from the study are designed to further the efforts of school leaders in creating welcoming and inclusive independent school environments for Spanish-dominant families. These guidelines aim to facilitate and improve parent engagement, encouraging active participation in their children's education and promoting a more enriching experience in the school.

### **Future Research**

Building on the findings of this study and the recommendations for fostering the engagement of Spanish-dominant parents in independent schools, there are several directions for future research. One such direction involves conducting a longitudinal study to assess the long-term effects of implementing these recommendations. Such research would offer valuable insights into the sustainability of the proposed practices and assess the benefits for their children. Another element to consider is the long-term impact of these practices on a school's Latinx enrollment.

Another area for future research involves conducting a comparative study to distinguish the specific needs of Spanish-dominant families from those of bilingual Latinx families in independent schools. This kind of research could focus on identifying both shared and unique culturally responsive practices that enhance Latinx parent engagement and participation, potentially contributing to a stronger sense of belonging and community among Latinx families. There is also an opportunity to examine the intersectionality of identity in the Spanish-dominant community in independent schools, considering factors such as bilingualism, socioeconomic status, and regional origin. Such a study could help tailor more effective recommendations to meet the diverse needs of Latinx families.

A third essential area for future research is to explore the experiences of students whose parents are Spanish-dominant or lack proficiency in English. A comparative study between schools that offer language services and those that do not could shed light on the influence of language access on students' academic success and overall well-being. Understanding the impact of language services on these students can help school leaders make better decisions about providing such services. This, in turn, can contribute to creating fair educational opportunities for this group.

A fourth opportunity for future research is to explore the transferability of similar culturally responsive strategies to various educational settings, including public and charter schools. Doing so can broaden understandings of effective practices that foster inclusivity in school environments, especially for parents with limited proficiency in English. Such a study could offer valuable insight into the adaptability of these strategies across various educational contexts, contributing to the development of inclusive practices.

In summary, the suggested opportunities for future research have the potential to significantly inform culturally responsive school leaders about effective practices for supporting Spanish-dominant families and other underrepresented groups with limited English proficiency. These research opportunities demonstrate a commitment to fostering meaningful Latinx parent engagement, enhancing Latinx student success, and promoting inclusivity. The goal is to ensure all students and families have the opportunity to thrive in independent schools.

### **Contributions to Equity and Social Justice**

This study was inherently relevant to social justice principles as it explored the challenges faced by highly underrepresented Spanish-dominant families in independent schools.

The data revealed Spanish-dominant families entering independent education rely on financial assistance from the school. Although financial support is essential for enabling students to attend, it is equally important for school leaders to proactively create an environment that considers the cultural contexts and needs of these diverse families.

At its core, the study focused on the idea of fair and equitable treatment for Spanish-dominant families and advocated for more equitable access for these families, allowing them to better support their children’s academic journey. Findings emphasize the urgency of addressing disparities encountered by Spanish-dominant families, especially those stemming from language barriers and cultural differences. Findings promote social justice by advocating for CRSL that offers equitable access to quality education, supports marginalized communities, and values diverse cultural backgrounds. Moreover, the study highlights the significance of empowering Spanish-dominant families, enhancing their visibility, listening to their voices, and creating an environment where their children have the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.

### **Closing Remarks**

This study has provided valuable insights into the lived experiences of Spanish-dominant parents navigating their children’s education in independent schools. The voices of the resilient group of immigrant Spanish-dominant *mamás* who participated in the study deepened our understanding of the challenges they face in supporting their children’s educational journey. Their determination and tenacity in overcoming language and cultural challenges served as a testament to the strength of their love and interest in their children’s education and future.

Findings call upon school leaders to prioritize cultural responsiveness by addressing the unique needs of Spanish-dominant parents. Fostering a collaborative school–home partnership is

crucial to support their children’s academic success and well-being. School leaders are urged to make an ongoing commitment to enhancing Spanish-dominant parent engagement as a catalyst for improving student achievement by keeping their parents well-informed, empowering them to be advocates for their children, and fostering a strong sense of belonging. Despite challenges, this commitment is essential for children with Spanish-dominant parents to thrive in independent schools. As educational leaders in independent schools, our dedication to the success of all students requires a genuine effort to cultivate more equitable and inclusive school environments for Spanish-dominant families—an empowering move that inspires hope and transformation.

## APPENDIX A

### Survey Questions (English)

Phase I: Survey

Format: Google Form

This survey will collect demographic information and responses that measure your agreeability with different levels of parent engagement in their children's school.

Duration: 10–15 minutes

Question #	Questions
1	Name
	<b>Demographic information</b>
2	What grade is your child/children in?
3	How many years have you lived in the United States?
4	What is the highest grade or level of education you have completed?
5	Does your child receive financial aid from the school?
6	Does your child/children take the school bus?
	<b>Likert-scale: Strongly disagree-strongly agree (1-5)</b>
7	I am involved in my child's education.
8	I have easy access to my child's grade narratives on the school website.
9	I am comfortable contacting my child's teachers with questions regarding their performance in class.
10	I am comfortable asking questions about my child's progress.
11	There are people at the school who I can talk to when I have a question/problem.
12	I can easily access written communication from the school.
13	The translated documents provided by the school are helpful to my participation.

14	I value the Spanish-dominant parent affinity group ( <i>Mi Familia</i> ).
15	It is important to me to participate in the <i>Mi Familia</i> monthly meetings.
16	Staff are welcoming at the school.
17	I feel welcomed by other parents.
18	I feel accepted and respected in the school community.
	<b>Checkboxes:</b>
19	<p>This year, I have attended or participated in a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parent–teacher meeting</li> <li>- Parent meeting with school director</li> <li>- Speaker session</li> <li>- School Family Party</li> <li>- Latinx Parent Affinity Group</li> <li>- <i>Mi Familia</i> affinity meeting</li> </ul>
20	<p>This year I have <b>initiated</b> contact with the school by calling/emailing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Latinx family coordinator</li> <li>- Child’s teacher</li> <li>- Dean/grade advisor</li> <li>- Division director</li> <li>- College counselor</li> <li>- School therapist</li> <li>- Learning specialist</li> <li>- Financial aid Director</li> <li>- Other:</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Questions (Spanish)

*Encuesta*

*Formato: Encuesta en Googledocs*

*Esta encuesta recopilará información demográfica de los participantes y sus respuestas que miden si están de acuerdo con diferentes niveles de participación de los padres en la escuela de sus hijos.*

*Duración: 10-15 minutos para completarla.*

<b><i>Pregunta #</i></b>	<b><i>Preguntas</i></b>
<i>1</i>	<i>Nombre</i>
	<b><i>Información demográfica</i></b>
<i>2</i>	<i>¿En qué grado está su hijo/a?</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>¿Cuántos años ha vivido en los Estados Unidos?</i>
<i>4</i>	<i>¿Cuál es el grado o nivel más alto de educación que ha completado?</i>
<i>5</i>	<i>¿Su hijo/a recibe ayuda financiera de la escuela?</i>
<i>6</i>	<i>¿Su hijo/a toman el autobús escolar?</i>
	<b><i>Escala Likert: Totalmente en desacuerdo-totalmente de acuerdo (1-5)</i></b>
<i>7</i>	<i>Estoy involucrado en la educación de mi hijo/a.</i>
<i>8</i>	<i>Tengo fácil acceso a las narrativas de calificaciones de mi hijo/a en el sitio web de la escuela.</i>
<i>9</i>	<i>Me siento cómodo/a contactando a los maestros de mi hijo con preguntas sobre su desempeño en clase.</i>
<i>10</i>	<i>Me siento cómodo/a haciendo preguntas sobre el progreso de mi hijo/a.</i>
<i>11</i>	<i>Hay personas en la escuela con las que puedo hablar cuando tengo una pregunta / problema.</i>
<i>12</i>	<i>Puedo acceder fácilmente la comunicación escrita de la escuela.</i>

13	<i>Los documentos traducidos proporcionados por la escuela son útiles para mi participación.</i>
14	<i>Valoro el grupo de afinidad [Mi Familia] de padres hispanohablantes que requieren servicios de interpretación.</i>
15	<i>Es importante para mí participar en la reunión mensual de [Mi Familia].</i>
16	<i>El personal de la escuela es acogedor.</i>
17	<i>Me siento bienvenido/a por otros padres.</i>
18	<i>Me siento aceptado/a y respetado/a en la comunidad escolar.</i>
	<b><i>Casillas de verificación: En las siguientes preguntas marquen todas las casillas que corresponden con su experiencia personal.</i></b>
19	<p><i>Este año he asistido o participado en:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Reunión de padres con maestros</i></li> <li>- <i>Reunión de padres con el director de la escuela</i></li> <li>- <i>Sesión de oradores</i></li> <li>- <i>Fiesta de Familias Latinas de la Escuela</i></li> <li>- <i>Reunión del grupo de afinidad de familias Latinx</i></li> <li>- <i>Reunión del grupo Mi Familia</i></li> </ul>
20	<p><i>Este año he <b>iniciado</b> contacto con la escuela llamando/enviando un correo electrónico:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Coordinador de familias Latinx</i></li> <li>- <i>Maestro/a de mi hijo/a</i></li> <li>- <i>Decano/consejero de grado</i></li> <li>- <i>Director de división</i></li> <li>- <i>Consejero universitario</i></li> <li>- <i>Terapeuta escolar</i></li> <li>- <i>Especialista en aprendizaje</i></li> <li>- <i>Director de ayuda financiera</i></li> <li>- <i>Otro:</i></li> </ul>



## APPENDIX C

### Group *Plática* Protocol (English)

**Group Norms:**

- Honor confidentiality. What goes on and is said in the group must stay in the group.
- Speak from the “I” perspective. Speak your truth.
- Support each other.
- Be respectful.
- Listen with empathy and compassion.

<b>Interview Information</b>	
Date:	Time:
Location:	Participants (pseudonyms):

I. Introduction	Notes
<p>Hello, my name is Silvia Salazar. Thank you for agreeing to participate in my dissertation study. <b>During this group <i>plática</i> we will explore how you each engage and participate in your child’s education and schooling. Just a reminder that the purpose of this study is to identify effective practices that appropriately engage Spanish-speaking parents and identify areas that the school can improve on.</b></p> <p>During the <i>plática</i>, I’ll ask you to tell me about your experience as <b>Spanish-dominant parents</b> and reflect on the support that the school provides you that allows you to be appropriately informed about your children’s academic progress and be involved in the school.</p> <p><b>These questions are not intended to be intrusive or make you feel uncomfortable, but if I ask a question that you do not feel comfortable answering, please let me know and you do not need to contribute to that part of the conversation.</b></p> <p>The interview will take approximately 60–90 minutes. With your permission, I will record via Zoom so that I can transcribe the conversation and use the transcript for analysis. If you do not wish to appear in the recording, you may close your camera.</p> <p><b>Do you have any questions before we begin?</b> [START RECORDING].</p> <p><b>Go over Group Norms</b></p>	

II. QUESTIONS	NOTES
1. How should parents be involved in their children’s education? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Are you able to participate in a way you wish you could in the school?</li> <li>b. Are there things you wish you could do but can’t (haven’t been able to)?</li> <li>c. What helps you?</li> <li>d. What prevents you from doing so?</li> </ol>	
2. Tell me about your experience at the school... <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Do you feel welcome?</li> <li>b. Do you feel involved?</li> <li>c. you satisfied with the education/experience your child is having?</li> <li>d. Latinx families are a minority at the school—do you think that has impacted your experience? In what ways?</li> </ol>	
3. Tell me about your participation in [Mi Familia] <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Participation in monthly meetings</li> <li>b. Participation in workshops</li> </ol>	
4. How can the school improve the school–home partnership <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What would be helpful to you?</li> </ol>	
5. Participation: What types of school programming, activities, or events have helped you build connections with other parents? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Has your participation helped you increase your sense of community and belonging?</li> <li>b. Any other benefits?</li> </ol>	
6. Reflection: How is your level of engagement in your children’s education or in the school in general affected your relationship with your children?	
7. Any challenges you have experienced as a Spanish-dominant parent at the school?	

III. CLOSING	
<p>We need to start wrapping up our <i>plática</i> now, but before we do, <b>is there anything you would like to add that I didn’t ask about?</b></p> <p>[STOP RECORDING].</p> <p>Thank you for your time and your thoughtful responses. My next step is to transcribe this conversation so I can use it in my data set for analysis. <b>Is it ok if I reach out to you if I have questions or need clarifications about this conversation?</b></p>	

<b>Thanks, again. If you think of any questions or have any concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch.</b>	
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## APPENDIX D

### Group *Plática* Protocol (Spanish)

#### **Normas para el grupo:**

- Honrar la confidencialidad. Lo que suceda y se diga en el grupo debe permanecer en el grupo.
- Hablar desde la perspectiva del “yo.” Diga su verdad.
- Apoyarse mutuamente.
- Ser respetuosos.
- Escuchar con empatía y compasión.

<b>Información de la entrevista</b>	
Fecha:	Hora:
Lugar:	Participantes (seudónimos):

<b>I. Introducción</b>	<b>Notas</b>
<p>Hola, mi nombre es Silvia Salazar. Gracias por aceptar participar en mi estudio de tesis. <b>Durante esta plática en grupo exploraremos cómo cada uno de ustedes se involucra y participa en la educación y escuela de su hijo. Solo un recordatorio de que el propósito de este estudio es identificar prácticas efectivas que lo involucren adecuadamente a los padres hispanohablantes e identificar áreas en que la escuela puede mejorar.</b></p> <p>Durante la plática, les pediré que me cuenten sobre su experiencia como <b>padres/tutores que dominan más el español</b> y les pido que reflexionen sobre el apoyo que les brinda la escuela y que les permite estar adecuadamente informados sobre el progreso académico de sus hijos y les permite participar en la escuela.</p> <p><b>Estas preguntas no pretenden ser intrusivas o hacerlos sentirse incómodos, pero si hago una pregunta que no les sienta bien responder, por favor háganmelo saber y no necesitan contribuir a esa parte de la conversación.</b></p> <p>La entrevista durará aproximadamente 60-90 minutos. Con su permiso, grabaré a través de Zoom para poder transcribir la conversación y usar la transcripción para luego analizar la información. Si no desean aparecer en la grabación, pueden cerrar la cámara.</p> <p><b>¿Tienen alguna pregunta antes de comenzar?</b> [INICIAR GRABACIÓN].</p> <p><b>Repasar las Normas para el Grupo</b></p>	

<b>II. PREGUNTAS</b>	<b>NOTAS</b>
<p>1. <i>¿De qué manera se deben involucrar los padres en la educación de sus hijos?</i></p> <p>a. <i>¿Pueden participar en la manera que desean en la escuela?</i></p> <p>b. <i>¿Hay cosas que desearían poder hacer pero no pueden (o no han podido)?</i></p> <p>c. <i>¿Qué les ayuda?</i></p> <p>d. <i>¿Qué se los impide?</i></p>	
<p>2. <i>Cuéntenme sobre su experiencia en la escuela...</i></p> <p>a. <i>¿Se sienten bienvenidos/acogidos?</i></p> <p>b. <i>¿Se sienten involucrados?</i></p> <p>c. <i>¿Están satisfechos con la educación / experiencia que sus hijos están recibiendo?</i></p> <p>d. <i>Las familias latinas son una minoría en la escuela, ¿creen que eso ha impactado su experiencia? ¿De qué manera?</i></p>	
<p>3. <i>Cuéntenme sobre su participación en [Familias Unidas]</i></p> <p>a. <i>Participación en reuniones mensuales</i></p> <p>b. <i>Participación en talleres</i></p>	
<p>4. <i>¿Cómo puede la escuela mejorar la relación de escuela-hogar?</i></p> <p>a. <i>¿Qué les sería útil a ustedes?</i></p>	
<p>5. <i>Participación: ¿Qué tipos de programación, actividades o eventos escolares les han ayudado a establecer conexiones con otros padres?</i></p> <p>a. <i>¿Su participación en estos eventos les ha ayudado a aumentar su sentido de comunidad y pertenencia?</i></p> <p>b. <i>¿Algún otro beneficio?</i></p>	
<p>6. <i>Reflexión: ¿De qué manera su nivel de participación en la educación de sus hijos o en la escuela en general ha afectado su relación con sus hijos?</i></p>	
<p>7. <i>¿Alguna dificultad que hayan pasado como padres/tutores hispanohablantes en la escuela?</i></p>	

<b>III. CIERRE</b>	
<p><i>Tenemos que empezar a terminar nuestra plática ahora, pero antes de hacerlo, ¿hay algo que le gustaría añadir de lo que no les haya preguntado?</i></p> <p><b>[PARAR LA GRABACIÓN].</b></p>	

<p><i>Gracias por su tiempo y sus respuestas reflexivas. Mi siguiente paso es transcribir esta conversación para poder usarla en mi conjunto de datos para el análisis. <b>¿Está bien si me comunico con ustedes si tengo preguntas o necesito aclaraciones sobre esta conversación?</b></i></p> <p><i>Gracias, de nuevo. Si tienen alguna pregunta o inquietud, no duden en ponerse en contacto.</i></p>	
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## APPENDIX E

### Individual Interview Protocol (English)

<b>Interview Information</b>	
Date:	Time:
Location:	Interviewee (pseudonym):

I. Introduction	Notes
<p>Hello, my name is ..... Thank you for agreeing to a follow-up interview to further reflect on your parent engagement experiences at the school. <b>As a reminder, the purpose of the study is to identify what the school is doing right to engage you in culturally responsive ways and identify areas that need improvement. This interview is to expand on some of the experiences you shared about during the group <i>plática</i>.</b></p> <p>During the interview, I'll ask you to tell me about your experience as a <b>Spanish-dominant parent</b> and reflect on the support that the school provides you that allows you to be appropriately informed about your child's academic progress and be involved in the school.</p> <p><b>These questions are not intended to be intrusive or make you feel uncomfortable, but if I ask a question that you do not feel comfortable answering, please just tell me that you do not want to answer, and we will move on to the next question.</b></p> <p>The interview will take approximately 30–60 minutes. With your permission, I will record this interview via Zoom so that I can transcribe the conversation and use the transcript for analysis.</p> <p><b>Do you have any questions before we begin?</b> [START RECORDING].</p>	

II. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	NOTES
<p>1. To start, I would like to get a better sense of how well-informed you feel about your children's academic progress at the school.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Do you know how to access/read their grade narratives on the school website?</li> <li>b. Do you feel comfortable contacting your child's teachers with questions regarding their performance in class?</li> <li>c. Can you give me an example about significant communication you've had with a teacher?</li> <li>d. How has that communication allowed you to better support to child's academic performance?</li> </ol>	

<p>2. Regarding accessibility, who are the people you can comfortably communicate with or reach out to at school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What do you do when you need to communicate with someone who doesn't speak Spanish?</li> <li>b. Is your child involved in your communication with the school?</li> </ul>	
<p>3. Regarding regular school written communication, how often do you access it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How much do you understand?</li> <li>b. How does this communication help you be better involved in the school?</li> </ul>	
<p>4. What types of family connections have you made in the school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How have those relationships benefited your overall experience at the school?</li> </ul>	
<p>5. What leadership roles have you had at the school?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How would you like to grow in that area?</li> <li>b. What do you need from the school to take on a leadership role?</li> </ul>	
<p>6. Follow-up question/s from the group <i>plática</i>:</p>	

<p><b>III. CLOSING</b></p>	
<p>We need to start wrapping up our interview now, but before we do, <b>is there anything you would like to add that I didn't ask about?</b>  [STOP RECORDING].  Thank you for your time and your thoughtful responses. My next step is to transcribe this conversation so I can use it in my data set for analysis.  <b>Is it ok if I reach out to you if I have questions or need clarifications about this conversation?</b>  <b>Thanks, again. If you think of any questions or have any concerns, please don't hesitate to get in touch.</b></p>	



## APPENDIX F

### Individual Interview Protocol (Spanish)

<b>Información de la entrevista</b>	
Fecha:	Hora:
Ubicación:	Entrevistado (seudónimo):

<b>I. Introducción</b>	<b>Notas</b>
<p>Hola, mi nombre es ..... Gracias por aceptar una entrevista de seguimiento para reflexionar más sobre sus experiencias de participación en la escuela. <b>Quiero recordarle que el propósito del estudio es identificar lo que la escuela está haciendo bien para involucrar a los padres/tutores de manera culturalmente receptiva e identificar áreas que necesitan mejorar. Esta entrevista es para ampliar algunas de las experiencias que compartió durante la plática en grupo.</b></p> <p>Durante la entrevista, le pediré que me cuente sobre su experiencia como <b>madre que domina más el español</b> y reflexione sobre el apoyo que la escuela le brinda que le permite estar adecuadamente informado/a sobre el progreso académico de su hijo/a y participar en la escuela.</p> <p><b>Estas preguntas no pretenden ser intrusivas o hacerle sentir incómodo/a, pero si hago una pregunta que le incomode, por favor dígame que no quiere responder, y pasaremos a la siguiente pregunta.</b> La entrevista durará aproximadamente 30-60 minutos. Con su permiso, grabaré esta entrevista a través de Zoom para poder transcribir la conversación y usar la transcripción para analizar la información.</p> <p><b>¿Tiene alguna pregunta antes de comenzar?</b> [INICIAR GRABACIÓN].</p>	

<b>II. PREGUNTAS DE LA ENTREVISTA</b>	<b>NOTAS</b>
<p>1. Para empezar, me gustaría tener una mejor idea de lo cuan informada se siente sobre el progreso académico de su hijo/a en la escuela.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. ¿Sabe cómo acceder / leer sus narrativas de calificaciones en el sitio web de la escuela?</li> <li>d. ¿Se siente cómodo/a contactando a los maestros de su hijo/a con preguntas sobre su desempeño en clase?</li> <li>e. ¿Puede darme un ejemplo de comunicación significativa que haya tenido con un maestro?</li> </ul>	

f. <i>¿Cómo le ha permitido esa comunicación apoyar mejor el rendimiento académico de su hijo/a?</i>	
2. <i>En cuanto a la accesibilidad, ¿quiénes son las personas con las que puede comunicarse cómodamente o contactar en la escuela?</i> e. <i>¿Qué hace cuando necesita comunicarse con alguien que no habla español?</i> f. <i>¿Su hijo/a está involucrado/a en su comunicación con la escuela?</i>	
3. <i>Con respecto a la comunicación escrita regular de la escuela, ¿con qué frecuencia accede a ella?</i> a. <i>¿Cuánto entiende?</i> b. <i>¿Cómo le ayuda esta información a involucrarse más en la escuela?</i>	
4. <i>¿Qué tipo de conexiones familiares ha hecho en la escuela?</i> a. <i>¿Cómo han beneficiado esas relaciones en general su experiencia en la escuela?</i>	
5. <i>¿Qué roles de liderazgo has tenido en la escuela?</i> a. <i>¿Cómo le gustaría crecer en esa área?</i> b. <i>¿Qué necesita de la escuela para asumir un rol de liderazgo?</i>	
6. <i>Pregunta/s de seguimiento de la plática en grupo:</i>	

<b>III. CIERRE</b>	
<i>Necesitamos comenzar a concluir nuestra entrevista ahora, pero antes de hacerlo, ¿hay algo que le gustaría agregar?</i> [DETENER LA GRABACIÓN]. <i>Gracias por su tiempo y sus respuestas reflexivas. Mi siguiente paso es transcribir esta conversación para poder usarla en mi conjunto de datos para el análisis. ¿Está bien si me comunico con usted si tengo preguntas o necesito aclaraciones sobre esta conversación?</i> <b><i>Gracias, de nuevo. Si tiene alguna pregunta o inquietud, no dude en ponerse en contacto.</i></b>	

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